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OR,

The Cool Half-Dozen.

The Romance of a Remarkable Raid.

BY ED. L. WHEELER,
AUTHOR OF "DEADWOOD DICK" NOVELS, ETC.

CHAPTER I.
STATES THE CASE.

FIVE men were seated in the governor's office, bold and determined-looking fellows, every one. That they were awaiting the coming of some one was evident. Conversation had flagged, and the governor was busy with his papers. Presently the door opened and a sixth personage entered.

The new-comer was a man of medium height, strong of limb and broad of shoulder, with a de-

THE IRISHMAN TURNED BACK THE LEFT LAPEL OF HIS SMUTTY VEST AND DISPLAYED—
AGAIN THE DIAMOND DICE!

terminated face and keen, arresting eyes. In a moment of age he looked to be not over thirty.

"Ah, you are here, Bristol!" the governor greeted.

He rose and offered his hand cordially, the new-comer taking it in a hearty and friendly grasp.

"As you see, sir," was the immediate response. "Is there some further service I can render you? I came as soon as your messenger found me."

"First of all let me thank you for the services you have rendered," the governor rejoined. "This is my first opportunity to do so— Very well, I will waive that. Yes, you are wanted again."

"What is it this time?"

Their hands had now parted, and the governor stepped back.

"Let me introduce you to these gentlemen," he now said. "Gentlemen, this is Mr. Richard Bristol, or Deadwood Dick, Junior, the man you are in search of. Mr. Bristol, Mr. Mansing Mason, of the United States Secret Service, and four assistants."

"Glad to meet you, Mr. Mason!" Dick greeted, offering his hand. "You are not a stranger to me by reputation."

"This is a proud moment for me, Mr. Bristol, I assure you," was the hearty response. "Your name stands second to none, at Headquarters, and I have long desired to know you."

They shook hands warmly.

"What the case is, Mr. Mason will now inform you," spoke the governor. "That it is an important one I need not assure you. Mr. Mason came to me inquiring for you, and I sent for you at once, well knowing that nothing would please you better than to take part in the matter."

Detective Mason introduced his assistants, and when all had taken seats he said:

"Yes, the case I have on hand is a highly important one, Mr. Bristol, and as the trail has led us to this wild land I desire you to take the leadership and thus insure our success."

"I hardly know about that," Dick made answer. "If anything, my reputation is second to yours, Mr. Mason, and—"

"Not so, sir. Moreover, you are at home here in these mountain fastnesses, where we are almost wholly unacquainted, and there is no man in the country so well qualified for the undertaking as you."

"Well, give me an idea what the case is."

"It is soon done. Some weeks ago the mint at New Orleans made a big shipment of gold, secretly, by a special train. It was thought that not a soul knew anything about it outside of those immediately concerned. That, however, was a mistake, as the sequel proved."

"The train was held up at a wild place not a great distance from St. Louis, and plundered. It was done in the night, and before daylight the gold had been transferred to some craft on the Mississippi, and there the trail was lost. It was kept secret, and not a word of it has the press ever got hold of. I was put on the case, and have been on it since."

"My first work was to get a list, as nearly as possible, of every craft that was afloat on that portion of the river at the time. Not an easy task, but I accomplished it more or less thoroughly, and in a short time. I had every one of these boats examined and searched, but without result so far as finding the gold was concerned. It did, however, lead to something else. We found one craft that had set out from St. Louis two days after the robbery—loaded with mining machinery."

"This machinery, we ascertained, was destined for some place out in this country, and there was one suspicious thing about it—perhaps two: it had been paid for in gold, new coin of the New Orleans Mint, and the machinery had been sent by water instead of by rail, by which move there did not appear to be anything to be gained. That, however, was explained by the statement that additional machinery was to be taken aboard at a point further down the river, and all was to be sent by rail as one consignment from that point."

"This was not satisfactory, to my mind, and we set out to overhaul that boat, but we were led on a false scent. The boat had gone up the river instead of down, and by the time we discovered where it had landed and unloaded, enough time had elapsed for the machinery to be almost if not quite to its destination here. This worked good in one way, however, for it made us sure that our suspicion was correct. We were convinced the five millions in gold had been aboard that craft, and it is reasonable to believe that it was shipped with the machinery,

if not indeed packed away inside the various pieces. It was a clever scheme, but it was overdone."

"Well, we stuck to the trail, and the result has been that we have tracked the machinery to a new camp out here in the wilds, a place called Death's-head Camp, and we have reason to believe the gold is there. Their game is to lie low until the case has grown cold, when they will probably ship the stuff away as the product of the mine, and so reap their reward. We want to nip that game in the bud, and we must; but, it will be a dangerous undertaking, and we risk our lives in engaging in it. There you have it, and now what do you say? Will you take the matter in hand and act as our captain, and so the better insure our success? I know you are just the man for the post, and I hope you will not refuse."

Deadwood Dick had listened attentively.

"You seem to have a plain case," he commented. "You have not said, however, who this robber is, or is supposed to be."

"Ha! that is true. He is a man whose face has never been seen, which renders the work the more difficult. He has been called the New Jesse. What his true name is, no one knows."

"But, you have a description of the man who managed the shipment of the machinery you spoke about, of course?"

"That is another point. I did not half tell the story, I see. The person who managed that was a woman, strange as it may seem, no doubt an accomplice, and she has mysteriously dropped out of the case."

"Have you been to Death's-Head?"

"No; we thought it better not to be seen there twice."

"A good plan, that. Well, if you are determined to have me, I will help you the little I can."

"Good! Success is ours now, boys, sure!"

"Don't be too sure of it," Dick enjoined.

"We may get the worst of it."

"You have never yet known defeat, Deadwood Dick."

"Oh, yes, I have!"

"Not final defeat," corrected the governor.

"And, you will not meet it here, either. He is just the man you want, Mr. Mason. Hang on to him, now that you have got his promise."

"As I intend to do, sir."

"Well, I take it you have told me all you can about the matter," Dick now observed.

"Yes, that is about all," Mason responded.

"The Government is out a cool five millions, but we think we know where to look for it now. There is danger ahead, however, for this New Jesse is a desperate character, and I need not tell you that we must look for a desperate struggle, with such a sum at stake."

"That is to be expected," Dick coolly answered. "I would not give a fig for our profession were it not for the spice of danger there is in it."

"Nor I. But, you have had more than your share of the spice, as you call it, seems to me."

"My food has been well seasoned, that is true."

"Well, when can you take hold?"

"At once," was Dick's answer to that. "I have been a considerable time away from home, and my wife must be getting anxious about me, but she knows well my character and that it is next to impossible for me to resist temptation in a matter of this sort; so she will understand. I will write to her before we set out."

"I would say go and see her first," supplemented Mason, "but the governor tells me your place is a considerable distance away, and we are in a fever to be doing something. She will prize you all the more when you finally do return to her."

The squad of thoroughbred detectives soon took leave to arrange the programme of their campaign, with Deadwood Dick their acknowledged captain.

CHAPTER II.

THE DIAMOND DICE DISPLAYED.

HIGH, rugged and precipitous rose the time-seared cliffs and peaks, deep dismal and seemingly fathomless sunk the gulfs and gorges.

The picture needs no further delineation; it portrays perfectly that wild portion of Arizona of which we write.

Along one of the deep, narrow defiles, where even at noontide it was semi-darkness, rode a lone horseman.

He was a man of middle age, judging by his appearance in that uncertain light, and the animal he bestrode was a gaunt, ungainly creature made up chiefly of hide and bones.

The man rode in a lazy, listless fashion, his arms hanging and the rein slack in his hand.

He was clad in black—seedy, shiny black, and an old high hat adorned his head. His coat was of the frock variety, extra long in the tails; his trousers were short, exposing several inches of the legs of a pair of "stogy" boots; and his shirt was the common red such as miners wear.

His hair, straight and sandy, hung some inches below his hat all around, a brush of whiskers graced his chin, and his nose supported spectacles of the old-fashioned bowed variety.

With a single notable exception, he wore no jewelry or ornament. On the front of his red shirt, the more conspicuous for being so strangely out of place, was a diamond pin which sparkled even in that dim light. It consisted of six stones set to form a figure like the six spots on a dice, thus:

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This strange personage seemed to be paying no attention to his surroundings and but little to his course until, presently, coming to a place where the defile branched in two directions, he promptly drew rein.

"Whoa, January!" he cried to his bony steed. "Here is where we stop to consider which way is right before we go ahead. That is prudence, and the prudent man taketh care unto his ways. But, here is a sign; this may guide us aright and save us all worry and trouble in the matter."

A sign there was, true enough.

At the sharp point of rock where the defile divided had been planted a post, and on that post were two guide-boards, pointing different ways, like this:

"deH shteD ot yaw sihT"

"This rode to ———!"

It was an art study.

The sign on the right was plain enough, but the one pointing to the left required some thought. Whoever the author of the idea, he had evidently been determined that no one should be led astray, and hence the arranging of the letters in the direction it was intended the traveler should go.

The defile on the right was narrow and dark, with a sharp descent, and was anything but inviting.

The other, the main thoroughfare, as it were, here seemed to broaden, and it took a slightly upward tendency from this point.

For some moments the lone traveler on the bony steed studied the situation; then he remarked, addressing the horse, as appeared to be his habit:

"As we don't want to 'rode' to Dash, old horse, I guess we had better keep to the left. It is better to be going up than to be going down. I make it out that *this* is the way to Death's-head Camp, and that is our destination. G'long!"

The poor apology for a horse set itself in motion once more, and the lone traveler went on his way as listless as ever.

Gradually the defile led upward, until at last it came out into a broad canyon where the light was stronger.

Here was a well-worn trail, showing that teams and wagons were not unknown in that quarter.

The lone traveler rode on, keeping the one gait, until he came to a point where a man was seated on a boulder by the wayside. There he drew rein, with the same word of command to his bony steed:

"Whoa, January!"

The man on the boulder was a typical Dutchman in typical Dutch attire, and at his feet lay a pack that bespoke his calling. He was a pack peddler.

"How d'e do!" the man on the rack-bones greeted.

"Ver' goot, mine fr'ent," was the response. "Could I soldt you somedings mit mine pack out to-day?"

"No, I guess not, unless you have a gilt-edge b'iled shirt. I might be able to dicker with you for that, perhaps."

The Dutchman held up both hands in horror.

"Mine Gott!" he cried. "You t'ink I vant to be der subject of a neck-die barty? If I dry to beddle b'ilt shirts mit a mining-gamp in, d'y would hang me oop so gwick id would make mine headt swim, you pet!"

"What do you peddle?"

"Oh, yust common dings; red an' blue shirts,

unt socks, unt bullets, unt dings like dot. But me b'ilt shirts."

"And where are you going?"

"I peen going to Deathbed Camp—"

"Guess you mean Death's-head Camp, don't you?"

"Vell, id vas all der same, anyhow. Say, dot is a poody nice pin you wear. I got one I trade you mit dot."

As the man spoke he drew aside the lapel of his coat and displayed a diamond pin with tones about the size of those worn by the man on the bony horse. There were but three, however, set in a row from left to right, thus:

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"I don't think we can trade," the horseman declared. "Yours is pretty nice, but there are only three to my six. By the way, what's your name?"

"My name by der vay? My name by der vay is just der same as it is in any oder places; Hans Yager. Now, v'at is your own name, maybe?"

"My name, sir?" and the man in seedy black drew himself proudly up and laid his hand on his breast. "My name is Eurastus Bungle, and I am a lawyer. I am going to this camp of Death's-Head to hang out my shingle. I must bid you good-day, sir."

With a bow, then, the horseman went on, riding in the same lazy manner as before.

Not a great distance further had he proceeded when he overtook another peculiar personage.

This time it was a young Irishman, wearing a sheet-iron high hat and carrying a tinker's kit and furnace.

"Good afternoon, friend," Mr. Bungle greeted as he came up, and the wayfarer stopped.

"Dhe same to you, sor, whoever ye may be," the tinker greeted.

"And where are you going?"

"Sure, it is fur Dead Head Oi am bound, or phwatever it is dhey call dhe same. But, begorra, Oi do belave me legs will play out before Oi get dhere."

"And I am in no position to ask you to ride."

"Begob, an' ye got down from dhat bunch av bones ye would be, fur dhen Oi could take your place."

"What is your name?"

"Mickey McGee, your honor."

"Well, Mickey, what would you give me for the horse?"

"Bad luck to me, sor, av he was up fur foive dollars Oi couldn't buy his tail, no more Oi could. Oi have somet'ing Oi might trade wid ye fur him, dhough."

"And what is that?"

For answer, the Irishman turned back the left lapel of his smutty vest and displayed—again the Diamond Dice!

It contained four stones, about the size of those in the lawyer's pin, and they were set separately to form a square, in this manner:

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"Oi see ye wear dimings yersel'," he said, "and it's maybe we can strike up a swap. Phwat do ye say?"

The lawyer smiled.

"I could not think of it," he responded. "I could not part with my noble Arabian charger at any price. It is beneath my station to walk, and were I to accept your offer I should soon be offering a kingdom for a horse."

"Sure, it's but a short span ye are from bein' afoot as it is."

"Fling not your aspersions at my steed, sir. This noble beast has worn itself threadbare in my service."

"In youth he carried me,
And I'll protect him now;"

or words to that effect, to quote the poet. No, sir; January and I can never part till Death thrusts in his sickle and severs the silver cord that binds—"

"Begorra, but Oi t'ought ye wur goin' to say ye would carry him; bless mesoul av Oi didn't!"

Lifting his nose high in the air, as though insult had been added to injury, the lawyer rode on without another word, leaving the young Irishman looking after him and laughing to himself.

Some distance further, and yet another character was overtaken.

In this instance the individual was a gentleman of color, rather smartly clad, carrying two sizable grips.

He stopped as the horseman came up, and putting down his grips, proceeded to wipe the perspiration from his dusky brow with a bandanna.

He was a rather good-looking darky, genteel in appearance, and on the front of his "b'iled" shirt bosom sparkled a single diamond similar in size to those in Mr. Bungle's pin.

Truly, diamonds seemed to be trumps on this day. And, was it a coincidence? Having likened the others to the spot on a die, this one would certainly fill the place of the ace, representing as it did a single spot:

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"Hello!" greeted the lawyer. "Whither bound, my sable friend?"

"I's gwine ter Head o' Death, sah, if I eber gets dar. Seems ter me et's a right smart way, sure nuff."

"I am beginning to think the same myself, well-mounted as I am. What is your name? and what are you going to do at Death's-head Camp? You did not have the name quite right."

"My name is Pompey Sunflower, sah, an' I'm a barber. I'm strikin' out fo' myself, an' I spect to open a shop dar at—at— What you said."

"Glad to hear that, Pompey; I will certainly patronize you. A barber is a luxury not always to be found in these wild camps. Well, I must hasten on, for the day is no longer young."

The darky responded, and they parted company.

Before the lawyer had covered another mile he overtook still another man on foot, and this one was the chiefest chieftain of them all, to judge of him at first blush.

That he was a bummer was patent at sight. He was greasy, dirty, and ragged, and shuffled along as though too lazy or too tired to lift his feet clear from the ground when he stepped. His flimsy hat was pulled low over his eyes, and his hands were in his pocket half-way to his elbows.

As the lawyer came abreast with him he looked up, showing a face that was covered with a stubby growth of beard.

"Mister," he said, "stop a minnit, will ye?"

"Whoa, January!" cried Mr. Bungle, drawing rein. "What's wanted, my poor fellow?"

"You hev hit et right, mister; I'm at present ther poorest feller ye ever seen in yer life. What I want now, wuss'n anything else, is a drink. Hev ye got anything drinkable about ye?"

"Sorry, but I haven't a thing. Did you not see that spring a little distance back?"

"Water? Would you have me commit suicide?"

"Ah! I see. You mean something in the way of liquor."

"Yes, yes. I can't pay ye, but here's somethin' I'd give fer one taste of ther real thing."

As he spoke he turned back the front lap of his woolen shirt and displayed a pin containing two small diamonds set like this:

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Again the lawyer smiled, as he had done when talking with the tinker.

"I will not question where you got such a thing as that, sir," he said, "but I am obliged to dash your hopes by telling you I have no liquor about me."

The bummer groaned.

"What is your name?" asked Bungle, then.

"My name is Kennaka Kolt," was the answer. "I am bound fer Death's-head Camp, if I can hold out to get there."

"And what are you going there for?"

"To get a drink."

A few remarks more were exchanged, when the lawyer urged his steed forward again, leaving the bummer behind.

He overtook no further travelers, but was ere long overtaken himself by a man on a spirited horse, a good-looking, well-dressed fellow, who had the appearance of being a sport.

He drew rein as he came up with the lawyer, and Mr. Bungle taking a quick survey of him noted on his spotless shirt front a diamond pin in form like this:

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CHAPTER III.

DEATH'S-HEAD CAMP.

As Bungle looked at the pin worn by the stranger, the latter in turn looked at the one

displayed on the lawyer's red shirt, and their eyes meeting immediately after, both smiled.

"I swear I would not have known you, Bristol," the sport declared.

"The same can't be said of you, Mason," was the response. "But, then, you did not set out to disguise yourself."

"No; being a stranger here, it was not necessary. But, what did you think of the men? How did Coke, as the Dutch peddler, strike you? And Hardy, as the tinker?"

"Excellent, both of them," Dick declared. "They are no better, though, than Martin as the bummer and Cooley as a barber. You said they were good at disguises, and I have seen proof of it."

"Well, what's your name and business?"

"I am to be known as Eurastus Bungle, and I'm a lawyer. I'll hang out my shingle when I get to the camp."

"And my name you know, of course, since my role was outlined before we parted company. I go to Death's-head Camp as one George White, a sport, better known as 'White' George, owing to my square dealing."

"You are well fixed out for the character, too."

"I flatter myself that I have done well."

"You have. You have plenty of money?"

"A load of it, thanks to you."

"Spend it liberally. I have a further supply for you if you run short. It is a cheap article with me, you know."

"I have heard that you are a millionaire."

"Yes, so I am. I say it not boastfully; merely as a matter of fact. When you come to know me you will find that I am not given to bragging and boasting. My wealth is nothing to me, further than I can make use of it in my work. I am the same Deadwood Dick I was when I was poor."

"That is well known, sir. Well, is there anything further to be arranged before we part?"

"I guess not. We understand the plans as well as we can, since we shall have to be guided mainly by circumstances as we find them at the camp."

"Yes. The diamond dice will be our cue. As often as we find it necessary to change our disguises, the display of the pin will reveal our identity to the others, and all will understand."

"That is the plan. I take it the distance is about ten miles further. You go on and I will arrive in due time. The others will straggle in one by one. The set of signals agreed upon will enable me to direct your movements. But, pardon me; I forget that I am talking to a veteran."

"No matter; you are in command. Well, good-day, Mr. Bungle."

"Good-day, Mr. White. We part to meet as strangers, as the summer girl says to her latest at the close of the season."

Both laughed, and the sport touched his horse, and in a few minutes was carried out of sight, while the lawyer plodded on at an easy canter, seemingly in no particular haste.

The Cool Half-Dozen were on their way to the scene of their dangerous undertaking.

Death's-head Camp was a hard place.

It harbored a hard crowd, and among its citizens were some of the roughest of the rough and toughest of the tough.

Yet there were, withal, some good and worthy persons there, as is the case in almost every place. The good and the bad mingled together, as perforce they had to, but the bad were in the majority.

Death's-Head was a comparatively new camp.

It had been established some time as a diggings, but of late it had taken on a boom.

There was a new mine in active operation, one that had recently been fitted out with the best machinery that could be obtained, and which was said to be paying big returns.

This mine was called the Sink Hole, and it was managed by one Milton Armstrong, a part owner in the concern.

The leading hotel at Death's-head Camp was the "Skull-and-X-bones," of which one "Professor" Hinckman was proprietor.

The professor was a man of learning, or had been, but one who had lent his talents to the wrong ends. He was past middle age now, and was commonly called "Old Hink."

And the chief saloon—What would be your mining-camp without that monument to advanced civilization?—was called the "Sarcophagus," a name that had been bestowed upon it by the professor mentioned, who evidently had a grain of grim humor in his make-up.

The citizens had confidence in the professor, and the name was taken up and became a

fixture at once, whether it was understood or not.

Old Hink knew what it meant, if nobody else did, and that was enough.

Anyhow, it was a name in keeping with the name of the camp itself, and that was one that everybody could understand.

It was a forbidding name, truly, but it had come to the camp in this wise:

When the place was discovered, there was a stake standing in the middle of the gulch at a point which was now about the center of the camp, and on that stake, relic of some Indian atrocity, perhaps, was a human skull.

It was old and weather-worn when found, the stake was about ready to drop, and it was speedily disposed of; but, it had lasted long enough to suggest a name for the camp, and that name the camp still bore.

Work at the camp had ended for the day, and the day was drawing to a close.

On the piazza of the hotel was a group of citizens, talking over an event that had been the occasion of much excitement some days before.

"Et's a mystery that I don't believe will ever be cleared up," declared one Kent Corrigan, who, by the way, was mayor of the camp. "Buck Banton had an enemy, and that enemy salted him, is my belief."

"It looks that way," agreed Old Hink. "But, it's strange who that enemy was. No stranger was seen here about that time, and there is nobody among us who can be accused of the deed. I think with you, mayor, that it'll never be cleared up. Well, a man can't die but once."

"That's so; but it's rather rough ter be taken off that way. There Buck was found, ye know, right out thar on ther ground, wi' a hole jabbed into him, and his bleed spilt all around, and that was all. Ther weepin was gone, and no galoot in ther hull camp was ter be found who had a drop o' bleed on him. And thar ther case stands, a big job for some detective ter sift."

"Of which the camp can't boast one," put in Milt Armstrong, the mine-manager.

"Right you ar', boss; unless this hyer is one comin' this way now. He is bran' new, whatever he is."

As the mayor spoke he jerked his thumb in the direction of up the gulch, and the others looking that way, saw a horseman riding toward them.

"He's a sport, I bet," ventured the landlord.

"An' he may be what I hinted, too," the mayor urged.

"Maybe you ar' right. Et will be easy to settle that question when he gets hyer."

No more was said till the stranger drew up.

He was a fine-looking man, with keen, cool eyes, and on his bosom sparkled a diamond pin containing five gems.

"Well, I'm glad I'm here, citizens," the newcomer cried, as he slipped out of the saddle. "I suppose I can get grub and lodging here, eh?"

"See hyer, fu'st," spoke up the mayor. "Ar' you a detective?"

The stranger looked at the mayor keenly for a second before replying, but his face changed not its expression one iota.

"Well, that's a blunt question but a fair one, I take it; I'll give you a fair answer: I am a detective, in one respect at any rate."

"Ha! what did I tell ye?" cried the mayor, looking at the others. "Didn't I make a close guess?"

"It seems you did," agreed the mine-manager. "The gentleman says he is a detective in only one respect, however. He may not answer the purpose."

"Wull, what kind of a detective ar' you, then, stranger?"

"I am a pretty good hand at detecting cheating at cards," was the smiling reply. "I am something of an expert in that line."

Every one but the mayor laughed, at that.

"It does not appear that he will fill the bill, mayor," declared the mine-manager, triumphantly.

"No, not ef that is as fur as his detective 'bilty goes," the mayor had to admit.

"And that is all I have any desire to lay claim to," the stranger assured. "What manner of detective are you on the lookout for? If you will permit me to ask the question."

"Why, I'll tell ye: Ye see, a murder was done here a week or so ago, and et ain't been sifted out yet. We was jest talkin' et over, an' wishin' we had a detective hyer, when we seen you a-comin', an' I made ter guess that mebbey you might be one."

"Well, I'm sorry your guess wasn't nearer the truth, friends, for I would like to be of service to you if I could."

"What is yer callin', then, ef we might ask?"

"Well, I am a sport. I handle the magic pasteboards deftly, for profit as well as pleasure."

"A gambler, then," suggested the mine-manager, bluntly.

"Vulgarly so called, sir."

The stranger was standing on the steps of the piazza, with the rein in his hand, and his first query had not yet been answered.

"Which of you gentlemen is landlord here?" he now inquired.

"I am, sir," answered Old Hink.

"Can you give me the accommodation I seek?"

"Yes, I reckon I can, sir. Dan, take the gent's horse."

This last to a lackey who was near; and, relieved of his animal, the sport passed up the steps.

"I understand you have something of a booming town," he remarked, as he stopped on the piazza and looked around. "If there is game here, I may stay awhile."

"You will find us game, clear to the gizzard," boasted the mayor. "If you have anything to put up you ar' welcome ter stay. What is your name? ef et ain't goin' ahead o' p'liteness to ask that."

"My name, sir, is George White, though I am better known as 'White' George, owing to my fixed rule of fair and square dealing with all men. I am a friend to friends, and a foe to foes; a good fellow to tie to, but a tough snag to run up against, as those who know me best can testify."

Having so delivered himself, the sport entered the hotel to register.

CHAPTER IV.

NOTES SOME ARRIVALS.

It was true that Death's-Head had a mystery; that a murder had been done that had not as yet been traced home to any one.

The victim of the crime, as has been shown, was one Buck Banton. He was a comparative new-comer in the camp, but a fellow who in a short time had come to be pretty well liked.

One morning he was found dead on the camp's Plaza, having been stabbed with a huge bowie by some one. He had received but one blow, but that had been effective, and the weapon was not found, thus putting the idea of suicide out of the question.

The camp's citizens took the matter in hand, to try and find out the murderer, but without success. No suspicion fell anywhere, and no clue was to be found. Hence, a mystery.

Banton's most intimate friends, those with whom he had come to the camp, had offered a reward for the discovery of his murderer, and that reward was still in force, but nothing had come of it, and now the case had grown slightly old and cold.

These mentioned friends of the murdered man were one Bob Keeler and one Ike Hokley, both good fellows, and both in the employ of the Sink Hole Mine, the former as superintendent, though he had not held the office a great while. They were well liked, and made themselves boys with the "boys."

Just after the sport had entered the hotel with Old Hink, these two came along and stopped.

"Who was that dude, mayor?" asked Keeler.

"He's a sport, and says his name is George White, called White George, for short."

"Card sharp?"

"That is about it, I reckon."

"Where does he hail from?" inquired Hokley.

"Wull, now, I give et up. You'll have to ask him. I thought at first he might be a detective, and could give you some help in findin' out who killed your pard Banton."

"Ha! is he one?"

"No. Says cheatin' at kyards is about all he could detect."

"Too bad a professional couldn't light down here, for Buck ought to be avenged somehow."

"But, I reckon it wouldn't be any use," said Hokley. "There isn't any clue, and a detective couldn't do much with the case without one."

"I opine that's so. I'm afraid it will allus be a mystery, as I was sayin' to Old Hink and Mr. Armstrong hyer when the sport kem along. Stay hyer, boys, an' you'll see him."

The two men sat down, and presently the sport stepped out to the piazza, having registered.

"Speakin' 'bout that 'ar murder," said the mayor, "these hyar boys ar' ther ones who was best friends to ther poor cuss, an' they have offered a reward. Good chance to make a start, pard."

"It would be useless for me to undertake

such a piece of work," Mr. White declared. "I hardly know whether to take it as an honor or not, that I have been taken to be a detective. Quite a joke, anyhow."

"Et would be a greater one ef a real detective would come along and onwind ther mystery."

"Say," said the sport, thoughtfully, "here is an idea, though it may not amount to anything: There is a lawyer on his way here, and as a lawyer is about the next thing to a detective, he may answer your purpose."

"A lawyer?"

"Yes; fellow named Snarl, or Tangle, or something like that. I overtook him on the road. He is mounted on the greatest rack of bones you ever saw. He told me his name, and said he was coming here to hang out a shingle. He may be just the man you are looking for—but, I doubt it."

"Why do ye doubt et, sence ye hev mentioned him?"

"Well, I don't believe he knows enough to make a detective. I set him down for a poor shyster. Still, I thought of him, and mentioned him to you."

"We'll see what he looks like when he gets here," remarked Keeler. "A poor dog is better than none, and he may be smarter than he looks."

"He won't have to be very smart to fill that condition," declared the sport, laughing.

The landlord presently announced supper ready, and, with others, the sport went in.

When they next made their appearance on the piazza it was growing dark.

The group there had increased its membership, and, as it was about time for the stage to arrive, the street was filled.

Just as the sport and the others appeared, a horseman was espied coming down the gulch, and at sight of him the sport declared it to be the lawyer he had mentioned.

The horseman came on at an easy gait, and when his bony steed rattled up to the hotel he sung out:

"Whoa, January!"

And he drew rein in a manner to give the impression that he was mounted upon a fiery charger.

"Don't pull too hard, stranger," warned the mayor of the camp. "Ye might pull some of ther bones out o' place. Don't disliterate his neck."

"Speak not slightly of this noble beast, good sir!" the lawyer admonished. "He has beer my companion almost from boyhood, and I cannot tamely stand by and hear him aspersed."

"He looks as ef he might 'a' been a kitten when yer granddad was a boy. Why do ye call him January?"

"Because that is his name, sir."

"Wull, say, ar' you a detective?"

"Am I a—a—what, sir?"

"Detective; feller what noses around and finds out secrets?"

"A spy? Do I look a spy? Does my appearance bespeak a contemptible sneak? I emphatically declare that I am no spy, but a lawyer, sir; a lawyer!" and he laid his hand on his breast impressively.

"Oh! ye needn't git r'iled over et," the mayor said soothingly; "I didn't intend et fer no insult to ye; detectives is better'n lawyers, any day, I take et. You orter feel proud of ther mistake."

"But, I do not. Tell me, though, why did you ask me such a question as that? I am at loss."

"Wal, we want a detective hyer, that's all."

"Why, has some citizen been going contrary to lawful ways? If so, the sooner I get out my shingle the better, perhaps. If it is anything with which the law has to do, gentlemen, I am right at home."

"Wal, ther law would like ter do with et, I reckon," assured the mayor.

"Then let me have the facts, I beg. I will weigh them, and if legal advice is wanted, you will find my rates as reasonable as the nature of the advice will admit of. Let us have the points, by all means. This is luck, to find a case awaiting me upon—"

"Oh, et ain't law p'int we want, ner yet any advice, uther," declared the mayor. "You show us ther murderer, an' we'll do ther rest."

"Murderer! Did you say murderer?"

"That's what I did."

"Ha! better than ever. By your leave, I will play the part of attorney for the State. It will be my business to find out and punish the base culprit as he justly deserves. And I will do it, if I have to expend the midnight oil in the interest of the case."

"You mean to say you will hunt down the rascal who killed Buck Banton?"

"I will, if the power in me lies, and I believe it does. Give me the case, as a lawyer—not as a detective, and as a lawyer I will twine a wreath of laurels for my brow. What say you?"

"Take it, an' welcome."

"And, sir," spoke up Bob Keeler, "if you are successful there is a reward of five hundred dollars awaiting you."

"I am your man!" cried the lawyer, rubbing his hands briskly. "Give me the facts of the case, even before I dismount, and I will begin my task with this hour."

Briefly but pointedly the mayor laid the case before him.

When he had done the lawyer scratched his head.

"You—you tell me," he said, "there is no—no—what a detective would call a clue?"

"Not a ghost of a one."

"And—and the cruel knife has not been found?"

"It has not," assured Keeler. "The whole affair is a deep mystery."

"Verily, I believe you are right. Nevertheless, I have said I would take it, and take it I will."

"And good luck to ye," cried the mayor. "What's yer handle?"

"My name, sir, is Eurastus Bungle. My name and my profession have nothing in common, however."

"You don't look like no common slouch, that's so," the mayor observed.

"Give me a chance, is all I ask," rejoined Mr. Bungle. "I have taken up this case in the name of the State. I will solve the riddle or—or I will ingloriously give it up."

Mr. Bungle then inquired about board, and while he was being cared for the stage arrived.

There was the usual complement of passengers, but only one in whom we have more than passing interest.

This one was a woman, rather sportishly dressed, and wearing a short veil that answered well the purpose of a half mask.

She was well formed, graceful in carriage, and, it was naturally concluded, pretty, though it could be seen that she was very dark.

She alighted without any help, and after one quick look around, as though to get her bearings, stepped briskly forward and mounted the hotel steps.

Naturally, every eye followed her, and when she had disappeared the driver remarked:

"She's a beauty, you can bet! That's a chance fer you sports."

"Who is she?"

"Give it up; you'll have ter see what she puts down on ther book. But, pard of Death's-head Camp, that's a hull b'ildin' o' galoots comin' hyer afoot. I passed 'em on ther road. That's a nig, a bum, a tinker an' a peddler that I know of, an' mebbly more fer all I kin say. Your boom hyer is drawin', sure pop."

CHAPTER V.

A NOVEL PROPOSAL.

NOT pausing to note further what idle remarks were exchanged between the driver and the crowd, let us follow the fair stranger.

She had entered the bar-room of the hotel with a business air, showing that she was no "tenderfoot," but well able to take care of Number One. Her manner was easy and confident.

Mr. Bungle, the lawyer, was just in the act of registering as she stepped up to the desk.

"Can I obtain board and a good room here, sir?" she asked of the landlord.

"I guess ye can, lady," was the response. "I have one room that will just suit you, I think."

"Very well, I want to stop here for a few days, and I will try it. I will register as soon as this gentleman has done."

The lawyer had just finished, and he looked up.

"Ha! pardon me," he cried, stepping nimbly back out of the way. "Had I known I was detaining a lady I would have made more haste."

He doffed his hat and made a profound bow.

"Do not mention it, sir," was the return, as the young woman took up the pen. "I am ever willing to take even chances when I travel alone. No occasion for an apology, sir."

"It is exceeding gracious of you to say so," rejoined the lawyer, "but you must allow me to hold my own opinion."

To that the woman made no return.

She registered, with a bold, easy stroke, and laying down the pen, said:

"There is the best I can do for you, Mr.

Landlord. Now, if you will show me to my room I will prepare for something to eat."

"Certainly, lady," said the obliging professor. "You have only to command and your lightest wish shall be gratified, if possible."

Calling a man to take his place for a moment, the landlord led the way and the fair stranger followed him out of the room.

It was then that the lawyer stepped promptly forward to learn what name the young woman had registered under.

There it was, bold and plain:

"FEARLESS FAN, OF 'FRISCO."

Mayor Corrigan, Bob Keeler, Ike Hokley, Manager Armstrong and others, had entered the bar-room by this time, led by curiosity to learn more about the fair stranger.

"Who is she?" asked Keeler.

This man, by the way, was something of a sport.

"She styles herself Fearless Fan, sir," informed Lawyer Bungle.

"Fearless Fan? And is that all the name she gives?"

"That's all sir."

"And she's from 'Frisco, eh?" now looking on and reading for himself.

"She's a plump little beauty, that I'm sure of," ventured Armstrong. "Wish that confounded veil had been out of the way."

"Are you inclined to offer her the position of mamma-in-law to your charming daughter, Mr. Armstrong?" asked Hokley.

"I am inclined to make her acquaintance, at any rate, if I can," was the reply.

"Which would be the first step, naturally."

"As it would probably be the last," here put in Keeler. "You are too old to stand any chance, Mr. Armstrong. Better leave it to younger bloods like myself."

"An' you would probably get left, too," remarked the mayor.

"Why so?"

"Why, this new sport, White George, kin discount you fer looks and dress, and them's two things wimmen set store by."

"Well, we'll see about that. Maybe not one of us will stand the ghost of a show, for she looks like a woman with a will, and she may give us all the cold shoulder the worst way."

The discussion soon ended, and presently the new arrivals were summoned to supper.

While they were thus engaged, and while the others were on the piazza enjoying a quiet evening smoke, another new arrival entered camp.

This time it was a personage on foot, a shuffling, ragged figure, who, as he neared the hotel, broke into a run and blundered up the steps and tumbled into the bar-room, crying:

"A drink! A drink! My life depends on a drink!"

He hastened to the bar, and leaning upon it with one arm, rattled the contents of his pocket with his free hand.

He was dirty and travel-worn, and panted heavily as he reclined his weight against the bar, and it looked at first as though he needed the drink to relieve pain of some sort.

Hearing the jingle of the fellow's pocket, the landlord made haste to set out a bottle and glass.

Instead of filling it to running over, as was naturally looked for on the part of those present to witness the proceeding, the fellow poured out only a moderate "dose" and downed that.

"Saved! Saved!"

So he cried gratefully, as he rubbed his stomach.

"Was ye so near gone?" one man spoke up.

"I was all but famished," was the reply. "I am not a heavy drinker, nor am I often and early, but when I want it I want it bad."

The landlord was standing to receive his pay, since he did not run his den of iniquity on charitable principles, and now the bumner drew his hand from his pocket and displayed its jingling contents.

There were buttons, nails, an old brass check, a poker chip or two, and other odds and ends, but nothing in the shape of money.

These were spread out on the bar, and the hand went down again.

Another display of the same was made, but still no money.

"See here," cried the landlord, "you are a skin! You have no money, and you knowed ye hadn't, too!"

"Don't jedge me too hastily, pardner," the bumner entreated. "I vow I thought I had a bit somewhar hyer in my load o' ballast, an'—"

"That wouldn't buy a drink, anyhow," growled Old Hink.

"Not a full drink, I know, but I only took half a one. I leave et to ther crowd ef et ain't so."

There was a laugh, and the crowd upheld the bumner's position.

"Yes, sir, only half a drink," he urged. "Ye see, I was goin' accordin' to ther 'mount o' capital I had, and no more."

"Well, where is the capital, then?"

"I have lost it, sure. Landlord, you will have to kill me or trust me, and I leave it with you ter say which ye will do."

"I'd orter kill ye, b'mighty," the professor growled. "But, if I let ye live, will ye pay me some time?"

"I will, I vow I will. As soon as kind Fortune smiles upon me I will discharge the debt."

"All right, keep your miserable life, then, but beware how you tempt me. Do not try another trick of this kind on with me, that is all."

"Sir, on my word of honor, it was no—"

"All right, say no more."

"And you will not trust me further than the bit I owe?"

"Not another bit further. My rule here is cash or nothing, and there is no exception."

"Too bad, too bad, for you are likely ter lose a payin' customer. Gentlemen, is thar another irrigatin' mill in ther camp?"

"Yas, ther Surcoffygus, over ther way," one man informed.

"Thanks. Since I am debarred here till my debt is paid, I must transfer my custom elsewhere. Adieu."

And with that and an awkward bow, the bumner backed out of the bar-room and was gone.

The Sarcophagus Saloon was the leading resort of the camp.

It was a gaming place as well as a saloon, and at night was always well filled with the camp's citizens.

And, as this was about the hour when the said citizens began to congregate there, many followed the bumner over to see the fun, for fun was looked for.

The proprietor of the Sarcophagus was one Jim-jam Joe.

He was a short, thickset fellow, with a bullet head and fiery-red hair, and was held to be a "bad" man.

If the bumner entered his place and attempted the same trick he had played on the proprietor of the Skull-and-X-bones, there would be a case for the coroner, it was thought.

The bumner entered boldly.

"Are you ther p'prietor hyer?" he asked of Jim-jam.

"That's what I am," was the brief answer.

"My name, sir, is Kennaka Kolt, and I am dead broke, but I am—"

"You can't get anything here."

"Not so fast. I want nothing. What did you think?"

"That you wanted to hang me up for the price of a nail to your coffin."

"Not so, not so. I have just had an ample supply at the place across the way. I have come here to ask you to lend me a nickel."

"Well, that's cool, by Goshen!"

"And you won't do it?"

"Not by a big sight!"

"Cold, cruel world," sighed the bumner.

"We don't run our places on ther charity plan, hyer," Jim-jam informed.

"Who is askin' charity?" the bumner demanded, drawing himself proudly up. "I certainly am not."

"Then what d'ye call et?"

"I asked fer a loan, that was all."

"Ther same thing."

"No, sir; it is not. I can give ample security. But, I will suggest another plan to ye."

"Well?"

"See this."

He displayed the diamond pin with the two stones.

Jim-jam saw it, and his eyes flashed enviously at the sight.

"I see it," he said. "I'll buy it off ye, if ye are broke an' want a stake."

"No, sir; I decline," was the refusal. "I will, however, stake this pin against five dollars, and throw the dice with you to see which takes both."

"I'll do it!" cried the proprietor of the den.

"Here is the sugar."

The crowd gathered around eagerly.

CHAPTER VI.

THE BIG SIX ARRIVE.

THIS was something new in the way of a wager, and everybody present was eager to see how it would terminate.

The regular games had not commenced yet, so everybody was free to give attention to the

matter, and those who knew anything about diamonds recognized that the pin was worth twenty times the amount put up against it.

They argued, from this, that the bumner did not really know the value of the article he had staked.

All looked to see the proprietor win a fine pin with very little effort, for, even if he lost at first, or even half a dozen times, it was believed he could still tempt the fellow on till his object was gained.

"I'll take ther pin off ef you win et," the bumner said. "No need ter bother about doin' et onless ye do."

"That's all right," Jim-jam consented. "If you make a kick you will find that we can take it away from you in less time than you can think."

"You won't have to do so, ef ye win et. Now, who first?"

"Just as you say."

"Well, go ahead, then."

Jim-jam Joe took the box, and his score was a high one.

"Guess I'll have ter climb ter reach that place," the bumner observed, as he took the box in turn.

He threw the same number of turns, and when he had done he had one more to his credit than the proprietor had to his.

"Not bad fer a beginnin'," he observed, as he took the five dollars and thrust it into a pocket. "I'm much 'bliged to ye, I'm sure, sir."

"Hold on," cried Jim-jam. "We'll try that again, ef ye please. I'll put up ten dollars against the pin this time, and give you the same chance over again."

"Well, it's only to oblige ye that I do et, pard."

"That's all right. See if you can best this, now."

The man had put up his money, and now he tossed the wicked cubes once more.

This time his score was less than before, and the bumner beat it by just one, as on the other occasion.

Now the interest of the crowd was great, and the proprietor was getting warmed up to it. He would have that pin, if he had to pay its price.

He insisted, and to oblige him the bumner played on, winning every time with the certainty of fate. And at last he had sixty dollars in his pocket, and still the pin was his.

"Say, what will you take for the dasted thing, cash down?"

So Jim-jam at last demanded, disgusted with his luck.

"Et ain't fer sale, pardner," the bumner made answer. "This hyer pin is my good-luck token, an' I wouldn't part with et fer any price. If I lose et fair, then of course et has ter go; but I'd never sell et."

"But, you have won all it is worth, and you might make a deal."

"Et was your fault. I only staked et fer a five, and was satisfied with that. You pushed the game."

"Well, here, I'll throw ye ten to ten cash. We'll see how that will go."

"Seein' that I'm ahead, it's no more'n fair to give ye a show," the bumner admitted.

The money was put up, the dice cast, and the proprietor won.

"Hal' your luck has changed!" he cried. "Will you put the pin up oncet more, 'gainst a twenty?"

"Well, yes, ef ye insist 'pon et; but, this must be the last time. If I lose I'm done, and ther same ef I win."

And with that understanding the throws were made again.

The bumner won, and the crowd cheered him wildly, while the proprietor muttered imprecations against his luck.

"Do not blame me, sir," spoke the bumner. "I would have stopped at first, but you drew me on. However, you shall have my trade while I am in town, and that will in a measure make up ther loss."

"To the deuce with you and your trade!"

"Just as you please. I hold no ill-will. Now I go back to the hotel to pay my honest debt. But, hyer, take this and treat ther house. Once more I'm flush, and when flush I'm free."

He threw a bill down upon the counter, and while the crowd proceeded to make way with it in liquid form, the bumner recrossed the street to the hotel.

"Now, sir," he said to the proprietor, on entering, and he slapped a bill down upon the bar, "I'll settle that 'ar little score wi' you. Jest take et out of this, ef you please."

Old Hink looked at him in amazement.

"Can't ye change et?" the bumner asked. "I've got somethin' smaller hyer, ef ye can't."

"Oh! I can change et," the landlord declared. "I was only considering where you could have raised it in so short a time."

"That does not matter, but I'll say that I picked et up across the street, as some of these gents who have followed me over can testify. Take out yer bit, ef ye please."

Mr. Hinckman had to do so, and while the crowd looked on, enjoying the situation, another new-comer entered the place.

This time it was a colored individual, one wearing a "b'iled" shirt, with a diamond pin, and carrying two good sized grips.

It was Pompey Sunflower, the barber.

"Good-evenin', gents!" he greeted, putting down his bags.

"Hello!" cried the mayor. "Hyer's another of ther cusses the driver spoke about."

"Yes, dat 'ar stage passed me on de road," the darky complained, turning upon the speaker, "an' when I axed him fo' a lift he told me he wasn't runnin' a colored line an' he wanted to git in 'fo' dark. I tell yo' I feel injured yet, ober dat."

The crowd laughed, and now all attention was given to the latest arrival, and the bumner was forgotten.

The latter had drawn away from the bar, having now received his change, and Lawyer Bungle was whispering to him in a cautious tone.

"Good! first rate!" he was saying; "all but one thing. You must give more care to the dialect you have undertaken. Stick to it every time you speak. It will be strange if it hasn't already been noticed."

The bumner did not turn his head or reply, and the lawyer immediately passed behind him and took his station where he could see the new attraction.

"Yes, sah, I feel injured yet," the darky repeated. "Might 'a' been in 'fo' dark m'self if he had been a Christian gen'm'n. But, land-lo'd, do yo' hab a color line heah, too?"

"I'm full, clear up," Old Hink promptly declared.

"Dat settles et, boss. Can't blame yo'. But, I hab come heah to open a barber shop, an' if dar is any place to rent I hab de money to plank right down an' take 'mediate p'session. Dat's all I want. Now yo' talk, somebody."

His want was soon supplied.

There was a vacant shanty not a stone's throw from the hotel, and he secured that.

"I'm in prime luck," he declared, as he was about leaving the hotel to take possession of it. "My name is Pompey Sunflower, an' when I open my senatorial parlor to-morrow I'll be ready to shave anyting dat comes along."

He was immediately voted to be a valuable acquisition to the camp.

The darky had barely gone when wild singing was heard, up the gulch, and all stepped out to listen.

"Oh-ho, Oi'm Mickey McGee,

So happy and free,

A wild Irish lad from dhe county Mayo;

Oi step whin Oi walk,

Oi spake whin Oi talk,

And dhe girls rave about me phwherever Oi go!

Oh-ho, a tinker am Oi

As handy a b'y,

As ever ye'd see in a day's walk around;

A pot or a pan,

A kettle or can,

Oi'll mend so complately dhe spot can't be found.

And there was a good deal more besides, but we have quoted enough for a fair sample of what citizens heard as another new-comer drew near.

Presently the Irish tinker came in sight, and he kept up his singing until he struck the hotel steps, when he stopped, not because his song was done, presumably, but because he had arrived.

"Begorra!" he cried, as he set down his kit and furnace, "but it's glad Oi am to get here. Av ever Oi did a hard day's tramp Oi have done it dhis same day, dhe which same is night, now. Oi am as hungry as a pig in dhe time av famine. Phwere can Oi get a bite to ate?"

"You have struck the right spot, if you have any tin," one man made answer to his query.

"Then it is roight here Oi'll be after stoppin'. Oi have dhe stuff to pay wid, and whin Oi am out av dhat Oi can take out dhe balance in trade. Who is dhe landlord av dhis shebang?"

Old Hink was there to answer for himself.

He could provide something to eat, but not

lodging, declaring that he was full, and could take in no more.

"Well, begob," the young Irishman accepted, "since 'atin' is dhe main part av me livin', Oi'll ate here and let dhe slape take care av itself. Lead dhe way to dhe locker, and begorra av Oi don't create a famine here Oi will come mighty near it; dhat Oi state fur a fact."

He entered, and putting his things down in a corner of the room, followed the landlord to the kitchen of the establishment, where he was served.

While he was thus engaged the Dutch peddler arrived.

"Py shimminy!" he cried, as he dropped his pack at the foot of the steps, "dot vas a valk! I peen so pooty nigh killed, ain't id, dot I don't know v'at vas der matter mit me, maybe. I nefer dake some more dramp like dot pooty soon, I bet you. Is dis blaces der hotel?"

"Yes, this hyer is ther hotel," answered the mayor. "Say, how many more of you fellers is comin'?"

"How many more?"

"That's what I said."

"Vell, now, I am all here mineself, and dot is all I know apoudt id. Maybe I don't know v'at you vas talking apoudt."

"No, I guess you don't. What's yer name?"

"Hans Yager, gentlemen. Maybe I could sold you somedings mit mine pack, ain't id? Pessness before bleasures, you know."

"No, we hardly think you can," declared the mine-manager, speaking up. "And, if you want anything to eat, you had better get in there before that wild Irishman makes a clean sweep of the board."

"I vas like a famished volf! Yust show me der vay."

CHAPTER VII.

TROUBLE IN THE CAMP.

It was laughable to the crowd to see the way the peddler made a hasty scramble to get in for his share of the grub.

Old Hink met him, and as soon as he had made known his wants he was conducted out to the kitchen where the tinker was doing more than justice to the viands that had been spread before him.

The arrivals by the stage, meantime, together with Lawyer Bungle, as shown in his case, had finished their supper, and the lawyer was again on the piazza, talking with the citizens and making further inquiries about the murder case he had taken hold of.

The woman, Fearless Fan, had gone to her room.

Some time had passed, when, suddenly a great uproar was heard back in the hotel in which were commingled Irish imprecations and Dutch anathemas.

Suddenly the inner door was flung open, and into the bar-room rolled Mickey McGee and Hans Yager, each clinging to the other with determination, and both talked at once.

"Oi'll choke ye, ye gossoon!" cried the tinker. "I vill hunch your plamed headt mit you!"

shouted the peddler.

"Oi'll ate ye, ye thafe av dhe wurreld!"

"I vill bite you like you vas a pulldog, maybel!"

"Oi'll tie ye up in a double bow-knot, begorra!"

"Yes, unt I vill make some gat-cut fiddle-strings mit you out, ven you vas not vatching out pooty gwick!"

And they were pulling and hauling and dragging each other around at a great rate, the while.

In upon them rushed the proprietor of the hotel, however, backed up immediately by the mayor, and the belligerents were pulled apart.

"What's the matter here?" demanded Old Hink.

"What ar' ye tryin' ter claw each other fur?" added the mayor.

"Begorra, dhat lop-eared son-av-a-gun was afther going fur dhe last bit av m'ate dhere was on dhe table," explained the tinker, "whin Oi wanted it mesel'!"

"Yaw, yaw, dot vas id," cried the peddler.

"He peen vanting to ead der whole plamed beesness unt let me go hungry; but I vas oop mit his game, you bet. Ven he jerk der meat mit mine mouth out, den I go vor his neck pooty gwick, maybe."

"Yis, begobl and purty quick ye was almost standin' on dhe top av yer pate, too, av Oi remember anyting about it. Ye had dhe last av dhe bread, and yet be hivvins ye wasn't satisfied but he wanted to ch'ate me out av dhe m'ate as well! Oi have a notion to—"

"What is this?" suddenly cried Lawyer Bun-

gle. "What is this? A case? A case it may be, as I live. Tinker, have him arrested! Peddler, prefer charges! I'll handle the case for both of you!"

"Get out, blatherskite!" cried the mayor. "I guess I am Solomon enough to settle this hyer difficulty out o' court."

"Begorra, nothing but his blood will satisfy—"

"Yust let me seddle mit him in mine own vay—"

"Shut up, both of you!" cried the mayor. "Hink, go and get that piece of meat they ar' fightin' about."

With a grin the landlord hastened off, while the crowd laughed, all being quick to apprehend what plan the rugged mayor had in view.

In a moment Old Hink was back again, bearing a piece of tough meat about half as big as his hand, and the mayor ordered him to cut it in half, which he did, and the mayor said:

"Now, you fellers, each take half and chaw. Chaw fer all ye're wuth, too, or ther wuss fer ye!"

The meat, by the way, had been on the floor, had been stepped on and otherwise maltreated, and was in anything but a palatable condition.

This both the belligerents saw at once, and each began to make his excuses in order to get out of eating it, as the mayor had ordered. It was not worth the fight they had made for it, now.

"Py shimminy, I will not ead it, 'less I can have it all!" cried Yager. "Der plame Turk had der last sticka brodt der vas on der blate."

"But, begorra," cried McGee, "ye was such a hog dhat Oi couldn't begin to hold a candle to ye at 'atin', no more Oi could. I had dhe right to dhe bread and the m'ate both!"

"I vant half der brodt, if I dake half der meat."

"Begob, would ye have me t'row it up fur ye?"

"Take it and eat, or I'm blamed if I don't take ye both in hand!" the mayor ordered.

"Let him have it all," the Irishman waived, suddenly. "He had his dirty mout' on it anyhow."

"And you ground id mit your nasty schoen, unt I wouldn't dake it in mine hand any more, maybe, you bet."

The mayor whipped out a revolver.

"Take it and chaw!" he ordered. "And if you don't, mighty quick, there will be a job for the undertaker hyer."

The two quailed at once, and each taking his share of the meat, they began eating it as though with the keenest relish, while the crowd laughed heartily at their performance.

Lawyer Bungle looked on disconsolately, seeing a case dwindle to nothing.

But, was it lost? He was thinking as he watched, or seemed to be, for he held his chin in a meditative way.

"There," cried the mayor, when the meat had disappeared, "that's the way we settle sech diffikities hyer. Let me find you two fightin' again, an' ye won't get off half as easy next time."

"The case is not wholly lost!" cried the lawyer, as though the thought had suddenly struck him. "You two can jointly sue the mayor for—"

The mayor's revolver swept suddenly around and took a bead on the lawyer's nose.

With a yell, Mr. Bungle jumped back and sought safety behind some of the crowd at the same time bellowing wildly:

"Don't shoot, mayor! Don't shoot! Don't shoot! I take it all back! It was only a joke, anyhow, for how could such fellows bring suit against the highest officer of the camp? Preposterous! Only a joke, sir, I assure you."

"Be more careful how you joke, then, that's all, or you may come ter grief in a suddent fashion."

The Irishman and the Dutchman were glaring daggers at each other.

"Begorra, Oi hate dhe soight av ye!" the tinker cried, vengefully. "Oi would not mend a pot fur ye, an ye had to cook your grub in a dish-pan, no more I would!"

"Unt py heavens I wouldn't sold you von bair socks if you vent hungry midout your preakfast, unt don't you forgot id!" declared the peddler, warmly. "Vor two cents I would—"

"Plug right up!" ordered the mayor. "Plug right up and git out, and if I hear any more of this hyer, I'll bang ye both."

The belligerents each gave a look of hatred at the other, and then each slunk away to his corner, gathered up his effects, and they left the room by different doors.

The crowd that followed them out, watching them from the piazza till each had disap-

peared in the darkness in opposite directions, suddenly had its attention drawn to wild cries from the direction of the barber's shanty.

"Come out ob dar, yo' low-down pusson!" Pompey Sunflower was heard to shout. "Come right out ob dar, I tol' yo'! If yo' don't I's gwine ter kyarve ye, an' I'll kyarve ye deep!"

A half-smothered retort was heard, and the crowd set forth on a run to learn what was the trouble there.

When they came up to the shanty they found the darky standing outside the door, wildly flourishing a badly nicked razor, and savagely inviting somebody to come out and get "kyarved."

"Ef I come in dar to yo', I'll make a clean job of yo', yo' bet on't! I hab yo' to onderstan' dat dis yere shanty is mine; I hab bought an' paid fo' hit; an' now I am gwine ter hab hit or I's gwine ter shed blood! Come out ob dar, I say, or I'll make yo' sick!"

"I reckon persession is ther best holt, nig," answered the voice of Kennaka Kolt, the bummer, "an' that's what I've got, hard. A man must have a place ter sleep, an' you wasn't ter home when I sneaked in hyer. If you want me out bad you will have ter come an' put me out, ther which same et won't be healthy fer you to ondertake, an' don't ye forget et."

"Hello! What's the trouble hyer?" demanded the mayor.

"I'll tol' yo' what's de matter, sah," cried the darky. "Dis yere bum hab gone an' dissupped dis yere shanty, an' he won't come out, dat's de matter; but dar will be wuss'n dat de matter, if I has to kyarve him, yo' kin bet on't!"

"Come out of there, you rascal!" cried the mayor. "This nig bought this hyer shanty an' paid good money fer et, an' I'll see that he has his rights. Come out, or I'll let drive a bullet right in your direction!"

There was a hasty scramble at that, and the bummer hastily appeared.

"Don't shoot," he pleaded, humbly. "I guess I have made a mistake, that is what's ther matter. I thort ther nig was maybe bluffin', and I wanted ter show him that I could bluff jest as hard as he could. I'll slope, ef ye won't shoot."

"Yo' had better slope, yo' low-down nobody!" cried Sunflower. "An' you want to bear in yo' recollection dat I carry a razor in my boot, an' if yo' come foolin' round heah any more I'll kyarve ye so's yo' won't be a fit subjeck fo' a decent inquest. Dat's de kind ob a man I am."

"Beg yer pardon, nig," the bum apologized, under cover of the mayor's revolver. "You wasn't at home when I kem in, an' I had a right ter think et was only a skin game ter git me out."

"Well, see dat yo' don't make no mo' mistakes ob de kind, dat's all."

"And see here, too," added the mayor. "And I'm talkin' to both of ye. This hyer camp is under my rule, an' I don't 'low nothin' out of order hyer. Ther deuce has been ter pay ever sence you strangers struck camp, an' ef there is any more of et, you will have ter git."

"But, sah, I was only defendin' my rights, sah," argued the darky.

"Yis, begorra," suddenly put in the voice of the tinker, "an' Oi was only defendin' me appetite against furren thavery. Roight is roight, begob!"

"Unt dot vas all right v'at wasn't all wrong," chipped in the voice of the peddler, who had somehow got around to that quarter in a short time. "Der pest dings you could do, Mister Mans, vas to hang dot Irishman."

"Whatever ye do, mayor," the bummer called back, as he was making off, "don't class me with fellers sech as these. I'm ther only one of my kind; a gem of—"

"Slide, dast ye, every one!" the mayor stormed, flourishing his revolver. "If ye don't, quick, I'll spill blood hyer! Git!"

And they "got," the peddler, the bummer, the tinker, and the darky; the latter seeking shelter in his shanty. And having scattered them, the mayor led the way to the Sarcophagus Saloon.

CHAPTER VIII.

SOME DESPERATE PLAYING.

"MIGHT jest as well let such fellers know at ther start who is boss in this hyer camp," the mayor muttered. "Et's fer their own good. Confound rantankerous tramps! they ain't no business hyer, anyhow."

"I guess they are harmless, mayor," observed the mine superintendent, Keeler. "If they want to wrangle among themselves, why, let 'em."

"Don't know but you ar' right, Bob."

"The thought struck me that mebbly they was in caboots," remarked Hokley, "but their fightin' was too earnest to give that idea a hold. I tell you what, Irish and Dutchy did go into it fer all they vas worth."

"There was no shamming there, that's sure," agreed Keeler.

And that had been the object in view with the wearers of the diamond dice: to disarm any suspicion that they were working together.

When they entered the Sarcophagus the place was found to be all alive, the various games of the evening having gotten under way.

The chief attraction of the place was the faro lay-out, which was run by a man named Bondell, better known as "Sportive Sport."

He was a tall fellow, good-looking, with womanish hands and features that were greatly deceptive, for he was an athlete of no mean ability, as many an unruly cit had discovered to his chagrin.

The newly arrived sport, White George, was present, having recently come in, and he was looking idly at the game from a distance.

Lawyer Bungle, too, was there, nearer the table and players, acting as though he was longing to risk a small sum.

When the mayor entered, in company with Manager Armstrong, Superintendent Keeler, Ike Hokley, and others, these advanced at once to the table.

The mayor looked around to note who were present.

His eyes rested upon the sport.

"Not hangin' back, are ye, stranger?" he greeted.

"No, not particularly so," was the easy response. "I am merely looking on while I finish my cigar."

"Then you'll try a turn presently?"

"I guess so, Mr. Corrigan."

"Let me introduce you, then. Mr. Bondell, hyer is a stranger sport, George White, by name, said to be better known as White George. Mr. White, this hyer gent is our prince of ther pasteboards, Sportive Sport."

White George had sauntered forward while the mayor was speaking.

"Glad to know you, sir," he said.

"Ditto," greeted the king of the green table.

They allowed their hands to meet in a formal way, and the Sportive Sport was immediately attentive to business again.

"Make your play, gentlemen," he called.

The table was not filled, but the few players placed their chips and the deal was made.

The bank won, but the amount was trifling.

"This small playing is killing," the dealer observed, with a yawn. "The risk is not enough to keep a fellow awake."

"Try your hand, sport," the mayor urged, speaking to White George. "You say that is right in your line, I believe."

"Perhaps the proprietor would object to it," the sport observed.

"Why so?" asked Sportive Sport.

"I'm a professional."

"So much the better. It will make it interesting. I am dying here by inches, of pure and simple stagnation."

"Well, I may be able to bring you out of that state."

White George sat down.

"What is the limit?" he asked.

"The bank's limit, do you mean?"

"Certainly."

"I thought perhaps you referred to the game. It has been practically unlimited to players. The limit of the bank is an even fifty thousand dollars."

"All right, that is enough to make it interesting."

The sport took a bill-book from an inner pocket, and opening it, displayed a stack of bills, the one on top indicating \$1 000.

Counting out five of these bills, all being of the same denomination, the new-comer laid them on the deuce.

A slight paleness had for an instant appeared on the face of the proprietor of the game, but it disappeared immediately and he coolly dealt the cards.

There was a little delay, but presently the right card appeared, and the bank won.

"Better luck next time, perhaps," observed White George, coolly.

"You make a pretty bold beginning," observed the winner.

"And it is only a beginning. I will do better after awhile, if I don't go broke too soon."

He had counted out ten of the bills, now, and he laid them on the same card.

Sportive Sport's fingers were slightly nervous,

now, and it was clearly no trouble for him to keep awake.

The small players, who had eagerly followed the new-cower's first bold stroke, hesitated before they followed him a second time, but finally they did so.

The cards were drawn, and—the bank won.

"Ha!" the dealer cried, with a breath of relief. "You are not in luck to-night, it seems."

"The game is young yet," was the quiet response.

Thirty of the bright, new beauties, at which more than one man present looked longingly, were now laid on a card, this time the tray.

The dealer was regaining his nerve, and dealt with a cool, steady hand.

Now the small players had deserted the bold leader, and were playing against his play, to win when the bank won.

Again there was some delay, but at last the card came, and, yet again the bank had won.

The excitement was now intense, and every man in the room was pressing around the table, every one eager to see and hear.

"Well, well, luck does seem to be dead against me," White George remarked, as coolly and quietly as ever. "I can't back out now; I'll have to double again, to protect myself if I win. If I lose— Well, that will floor me for this time."

"Hold on, sir," Sportive Sport ordered, pushing back the sixty bills which the new-comer was about to place. "The limit is fifty thousand, as I told you."

White George looked at him keenly.

"But," he said, "your bank has been strengthened by the thirty thousand you have just won from me. If I win now, your loss will be but twenty thousand."

"Can't help it, sir; you understood the limit when you began."

"Then you refuse to accept my double?"

"I do."

"And you call this a square game?"

"Perfectly so, sir. The limit is what I stated."

"It is not a white game, at all events, such as I am used to playing."

"You understood what the limit was when you began. You made inquiry about it at the start. Make your play, gentlemen."

Sportive Sport was now icily cool, and master of the situation.

White George was as cool as he had been at first, and had spoken quietly and dispassionately.

"You had better take his bet, Sportive Sport," spoke out the mayor. "It's an even chance that you'll win, anyhow. If you lose, then ye can't kick."

"My decision has been stated," was the response. "Make your play, gentlemen."

"Well, here is fifty thousand, then," the new-comer stated, having taken up ten of the bills.

"I will go your full limit, at any rate."

"You may do that as often as you like."

The cards were dealt, and a pin could have been heard to drop anywhere in the room. One by one they came out, for and against, for and against, and at last came the one so eagerly looked for.

The bank had won again!

"I am done for," said White George, quietly, and he showed not the least degree of excitement. "I can make but one more effort to-night."

He counted his money, and found that he had only forty of the bills left.

"Ye had better try it in small lots," advised the mayor. "Yer luck may change and put ye on yer feet again."

"No; I hate to dabble. I like to play big or not at all. Were I better fixed I would stand more of a chance. But, easy come easy go, 'tis said, and so here it goes."

More than half the cards had been dealt by this time, yet there was one card on the table that had not been represented, and over that the small players were hovering like hawks.

They had some knowledge of the chances of the game, evidently, and knew that their best chance lay there.

Contrary to that plan, however, the newly arrived sport placed his last stake upon a card that had three times appeared, and of which there was only one more in the box.

Perhaps he had been studying the run, and had made his calculations accordingly.

Be that as it might, the dealer looked at him keenly for a second before he drew the cards from the metal box.

On the first draw the small players won.

They were jubilant, and immediately doubled

their plays, taking the risk of another favorable turn.

Another draw, and they had won again. But, this time they deserted the favorite and scattered their bets, not caring to trust further to the run.

Better had they remained there, for again that card won for the players. The card most wished-for, however, was tardy to appear. But, it came at last, and a shout went up.

White George had won!

"I thought the tide would turn," he coolly observed. "Now, Mr. Bondell, I am able to take you at your limit."

"Very well, sir, the game is open to you, of course. Make your play, gentlemen."

Again and yet again did the sport win, heavy sums each time, and at last the dealer had to declare the bank broken. Such a run of luck had never been seen in the Sarcophagus, and scarcely a man there had ever seen so much money displayed at one time.

CHAPTER IX.

THE UNEXPECTED HAPPENS.

SPORTIVE SPORT rose from his seat, white to the lips.

"You have spoiled me," he said. "I am cleaned out as clean as a whistle."

"I have been there myself," declared the new sport. "I know how you feel. I will buy your game."

"How much will you give me?"

"Name your price."

"Well, ten thousand dollars for the fixtures and good will."

"Here is your money! Let these gentlemen witness the bargain. I will take your place."

"And I will take yours."

"Not to-night. I will not allow you to risk your little nest-egg while your nerves are unsteady, as they are. Come to-morrow night, and you shall have all the opportunity you want."

"No, sir; I refuse to accept it that way. If you open the game I am going to play against you."

"Very well, if you insist. If you go broke, don't blame me."

"I will not, if you play a fair game."

"I am known as White George, for my fair dealing. I say it myself because there is no one here to say it for me."

Under these altered circumstances the game was renewed, and when it was well under way it was seen that the new proprietor was gradually losing what he had won, and that Sportive Sport was gaining.

The small players had nearly all dropped out, now, having "dropped" about everything else they had to drop, and their places had been taken by men who had more capital to risk.

Among these were Milton Armstrong, Bob Keeler, Ike Hokley and others.

About this time a new-comer entered the saloon.

This personage was the young woman who had arrived by the stage, and who had registered as Fearless Fan.

Way was made for her, and she advanced unconcernedly to the table, every eye in the room fixed upon her, to which she gave no heed or notice.

Her veil had been removed.

She was a young woman, about twenty-five at a guess, and her dark skin made it evident that she was a child of some sunny clime.

That she had been beautiful was not to be denied, but now there appeared a white scar across her face from one side to the other, diagonally, which marred her looks greatly.

She wore large earrings, making it appear that she might claim Italy for her fatherland.

There was not the slightest indication of a foreign accent in her speech, however, and she was a mystery to the close observers.

Among these was Lawyer Bungle.

He looked at the woman with close scrutiny, but evidently gave it up.

When she reached the table, she asked:

"Gentlemen, will you allow me to interrupt your play with a question?"

White George, Sportive Sport, and the others, looked up instantly, and the first mentioned responded:

"Certainly, lady. Ask a dozen if you like."

"I will ask but one or two. Does any one here know of a man by name of Brink Kennet?"

It was evident that no one did.

"Well, he may be here under any other name," the young woman went on. "You may be able to recognize him by this likeness. Take it, and let it be passed around, if you please."

The mayor was nearest to her, and she handed a card photograph to him.

It was the likeness of a young man, rather good-looking, but one who was a stranger to the mayor.

"I have never seen him, ma'am," that worthy declared.

He passed the card on.

And so it was passed, from hand to hand, until it had made the round of the room, but no one knew the face.

The young woman had stood, meantime, patiently awaiting its return.

At last it came back to her.

"It appears that no one here recognizes the face, lady," said George White, as it fell to him to return the card to its owner.

"Then I am doomed to disappointment again," she sighed.

"Might we ask what that man was to you?" the mayor inquired.

"What he was to me?" the woman repeated, bitterly. "You see this scar on my face?"

"Yes, sartain."

"Well, he was *that* to me! I am seeking him to return the compliment."

"And by ther 'ternal, et's ter be hoped ye will find him!" the mayor cried. "Ef ye do, jest p'int him out to us, that's all."

"Thank you. I understand your offer, but I will deal with the man myself, if I ever can find him. Do I mistake in taking you to be the mayor of this camp, sir?"

"Not a bit, ma'm."

"Then there is a favor I would ask."

"Ye hev only ter name et, an' et's granted."

"Will you allow me to earn a little money by telling fortunes here in your camp?"

"Bless yer heart, lady, ther hull darn camp is yourn, ef that is all ye have ter ask. And ther galoot what don't put up a fiver fer his fortune has got ter answer to me."

"Thank you, sir; but there must be no compulsion about it."

"You leave that ar' to me, lady. Do you hear, you galoots of Death's-Head? I want every man of ye ter have his fortun' took while this lady is hyer to do et."

"Not to-night, sir," the woman said. "To-morrow I will begin."

She bowed, and was about to turn to retire from the saloon when there came suddenly the tread of hasty hoofs without, and the next moment a horseman thundered into the room.

Jim-jam Joe, behind the bar, raised his hands in horror at the sight, but the next instant he disappeared when the stranger drew a revolver and flourished it, while at the same time he shouted:

"Men of Death's-head Camp, do ye know that ye hev got that infernal detective, Deadwood Dick, Junior, here in your camp?"

"Deadwood Dick!"

So many a one exclaimed, for it was a name they had heard mentioned in connection with many a deed of daring.

"Yes, Deadwood Dick," the horseman emphasized. "Curse him! only point him out to me, and I'll mighty soon relieve ye of all trouble on his account."

The rough mayor was now upon his feet.

"Don't ye go off too soon, stranger," he advised. "Who an' what ar' you, an' what has sent ye hyer so red-hot?"

"Who am I?"

"That's w'ot I said."

"Well, I am known as Wild Ward, where I am known at all. I'm a stranger hyer, but I'm at home just the same. I am out on a man-hunt, and it has led me this way. I guess that's enough."

"And ther man ye ar' huntin' is Deadwood Dick?"

"Yes, by Goshen! He sent me down for a dozen years, when he was only a kid, and I have had it in fer him all this time. Show him to me, and that's all I ask ye to do. I'll do ther rest."

"My friend," here chipped in Lawyer Bungle, "you are going contrary to law, and the man that goes contrary to law never comes to any good end. Now, to-morrow I am going to swing my shingle to the breeze here, as a lawyer, and I'll take this case of yours and carry it through for you on terms the most reason—"

"Take nothin'!" was the savage interruption. "I'm my own law in this matter, and judge and jury besides. Has that man been seen here?"

"You will have to ask somebody else, sir," answered the lawyer. "I'm only a stranger here myself."

"A stranger here, are ye? I'll take a closter look at you, I'm thinkin'."

He touched his horse, and forced the animal forward into the crowd, until he made his way to where the lawyer was standing.

"My goodness!" Bungle cried, as the fellow presented his revolver at him. "I don't want ter die, my good man, I don't want to die! I won't say another word to you, honor bright!"

"Bah! you are genuine. I thought you might be the man I'm after, in disguise; for they tell me he is the devil at that."

The lawyer drew a breath of relief and his handkerchief, mopping his face with the latter.

"Heavens! what a shock!" he gasped. "Verily, I am all but undone."

The crowd laughed at his fright.

"But, Wild Ward, ef that's yer handle," the mayor demanded, "how do ye happen ter know that this man Deadwood Dick is hyer? And ef he is, do ye suppose we ar' goin' ter stand by an' see him salted?"

"How do I know et? I'll tell ye that in short meter: I was at his home base, Bristol City, layin' low fer him, and thar I got holt of a letter what he'd sent to his better-half, sayin' he was goin' ter Death's-head Camp to work out a case, and that he would be home to his lovey-dovey as soon as he had done et."

"And how long ago was that?"

"Not much more'n long enough fer me to git hyer on hoss-flesh. As ter saltin' him, ef I git a bead on him nothin' is goin' ter save him, an' don't ye forget et. His long-termers is beginnin' ter come out, an' I'm one of 'em. I'm goin' ter take et out of him fer every hour I was below, you bet. I might 'a' waited thar at Bristol City, but I was too impatient fer that."

"Besides, you wanted to ketch him where he wouldn't have so many friends on hand, eh?"

"Well, I didn't ferget that part of et, boss."

This was interesting, interesting to more than one person present.

"Wull, we haven't seen him hyer, to our knowledge," declared the mayor. "We have a good many strangers in town, though. What fer a looker is he?"

"Darn good-lookin', they tell me, and as rich as a king. He is a millionaire, now, and don't think nothin' of carryin' a cool hundred thousand around in his clothes."

Many eyes naturally turned upon White George.

He rose quietly in his place, his hand clutching a revolver, and as quietly he said:

"The last part of that description turns attention to me, I see. I want to assure everybody present, however, that I am not Deadwood Dick. Make up your mind about it, sir, at once."

This last to the horseman.

CHAPTER X. MYSTERY DOUBLED.

WILD WARD, as the horseman had styled himself, glared at the cool sport with keen interest.

So did nearly everybody else, with no less interest, and trouble was looked for. Many believed the man was really Deadwood Dick.

"Ther shoe seems ter pinch yer foot, anyhow," fired the horseman. "What need had ye ter take et up, ef you ain't Deadwood Dick? Thar's somethin' fer ye ter answer, ef ye kin."

The fellow fingered his weapon threateningly.

"You have already heard my reason," responded the cool sport. "I had a large sum of money about me to-night when I came here, as these citizens know, and when you mentioned the fact that Deadwood Dick thought nothing of carrying a hundred thousand around with him, attention turned to me."

"An' you took et right up, soon. Ye jumped fore ye was hurt, so ter say. I think et looks mighty like you ar' Deadwood Dick."

"I have given you my word that I am not."

"Wull, kin ye prove et?"

"Can you prove my statement false?"

"I hev got a bullet hyer that is hungry ter find ye."

"You had better not risk firing it this way, for I am handy on the draw."

"So is Deadwood Dick, so they say. See hyer, sport, I believe you ar' that cuss. Ef ye r' him, yer life is mine!"

"Let me put in a word here, please."

It was a woman's voice, and every eye turned upon the speaker.

Fearless Fan had made her way quietly to the horseman's side, and now she held a glittering revolver aimed at his head.

"Say yer say, gal," the man growled.

"I once knew Deadwood Dick, and this man is not he. Will you take my word for it?"

"Whar did you know him?"

"No matter where; he once did me a service that I cannot forget, and even were he here I would defend him with my life."

"Haw! haw! That's ruther pooty, gal, but et's all wash. I know Dick has a good many admirers 'mongst ther fair sex, an' a good many of 'em would die fer him, an' all that; but when et kem to ther pinch I reckon they wouldn't."

Lawyer Bungle was looking keenly at this woman again.

He had seen her before; but, where? He could not recall that scar, nor was her dark skin a reminder.

"You make a mistake in your estimate of me, as I will show you, sir," the woman firmly rejoined. "This man is not Deadwood Dick; but, since you seem inclined to believe he is, I will take the same stand that I would were he that noble and generous man."

"And what stand is that 'ar ef I may ax ye that?"

"I'll defend him."

"Haw! haw! haw! How pooty that 'ar do sound!"

"Lady," spoke up White George, now, "I cannot permit this. You are running a risk. I am well able to take care of myself."

"Fearless Fan never backs out when she has turned her hand to a task, sir," the young woman made response to that. "You, sir, turn and leave the room at once."

This order was to Wild Ward, and her weapon came up yet more threateningly as she uttered it.

The fellow turned a sickly yellow, and attempted a grin, but it was a failure. He was at the business end of a bad fix, and knew it.

"Yer, yer don't mean et," he parleyed. "I ain't done nothin' ter you, an' yer ain't got no call ter do nothin' ter me. Jest pint that 'ar thing another way, gal, fore thar's trouble hyer."

"There is going to be trouble here, and that in short order, if you do not obey me."

"Do ye mean ter shoot me?"

"Just as sure as you are here, if you do not obey quickly. You have shown by your words what you are, and I would be justified in dropping you, after the threat you have made against a man who is not here to speak for himself."

The fellow was trying to edge away, and was fingering his revolver in an anxious manner.

"Keep that arm straight down," the woman ordered, "or I'll drill you. And now, go, or I'll drop you off that horse in one second."

There was a ring to her command this time that was not to be doubted, and with a curse the fellow started for the door.

"I'll pay ye fer this hyer," he growled. "Ye think ye ar' darn smart, but I will square ther 'count with ye, even ef ye be a woman. You had ther drop, but you won't have et next time."

"Take care, sir, for you are not out of range yet. I could drop you even yet. Some one near the door there please see to it that he does not turn and fire at me after he has passed out. He is evil enough for such a deed."

Said one man:

"I'll make et my business ter see ter that, lady. Let him try et on, an' thar will be a job fer ther crowner."

The horseman went on and out, still growling, and the woman put away her weapon.

"You have made an enemy for yourself, Fearless Fan," spoke White George.

"My enemies are harmless, for I am not afraid of them. My name is not a misnomer, sir."

"We are well aware of that."

"I want to assure these gentlemen once more that I know Deadwood Dick by sight, and that you are not the man, sir."

"I think they will be willing to take my word for that."

"Maybe so. Well, I now return to the hotel. I will bid you good-night."

"Hold on," cried the sport. "You must not venture out alone. I will go with you and—"

"No, no, sir; it is not necessary. I prefer to go alone. I can take care of myself against such rascals as the fellow I just turned out from here."

With a smile, then, she was gone.

"Goodness bless me!" cried Lawyer Bungle, then. "Did anybody ever see such a woman as that? Really, she did the very thing I was thinking about doing. She got ahead of me."

"You tho't about doin'," cried the mayor. "You was too skart ter tell whether ye stood on yer head or yer feet. But, boyees, did anybody ever see narve ter come up ter that, in a woman?"

The "boyees" admitted that they never had.

Interest in the games was now at an end, except in the case of Sportive Sport, and the men dropped away from the table to discuss the recent events.

Sportive Sport insisted upon being allowed to play out the balance of the hour, and White George agreed to keep the game open that long, showing his willingness to give the former owner all the chance possible to recover his losses.

When the end of the hour came, though, the bank was the winner, and Sportive Sport had "gone broke," as it was expressed.

"You have done for me," he said, bitterly. "I will try you again to-morrow night, though, if I can raise money to start with. I will have back what you have wrested from me, or—"

He stopped, however, and uttered no threats.

The excitement of the night was over, gradually the citizens retired, and finally the camp slept.

On the following morning the early risers made a terrible discovery.

During the night another crime had been committed, one which recalled vividly the tragic fate of Buck Banton.

Out in the street, between the Sarcophagus and the Skull-and-X-bones, the body of a man was found, cold in death, with a terrible knife-wound in his breast.

The man was Ike Hokley!

The discoverer gave the alarm at once, and speedily the camp was astir.

Men came running from everywhere, and the excitement was great. Who could the murderer be? That was the question.

"This hyer thing has gone too fur," cried the mayor of the camp. "Hyar is another poor cuss checked in, as good a feller as ther camp could show."

"Id vas a poody goot blaces to move out mit, ain'd id?" observed Hans Yager, the Dutch peddler. "Id wouldn't peen nice to vake oop some mornings unt found a hole like dot in your pody, maybe."

And everybody else had some remark to make, all talking at once.

Lawyer Bungle did not reach the spot till the crowd had grown large. In fact, nearly the whole camp was there ahead of him.

"What terrible thing is this?" he asked, aghast as he came up.

"Et's another murder, that's what," cried the mayor. "And it's as great a mystery as t'other one was, too."

"My goodness! Another murder! What are we coming to? Now I have a double case on hand. Gentlemen, let the law take its course. Do nothing rash, I beg of you."

"What in hot are ye talkin' about?" demanded the mayor.

"I mean to say, sir, do not go to lynching promiscuously, but let me have time to bring the crime home to the right man."

"Do you think you can do it this century, sir?" asked Manager Armstrong.

"Or at all?" asked Bob Keeler.

The latter, who had been the dead man's bosom friend, was taking on like a madman about the terrible affair.

"Give me time, gentlemen, give me time," the lawyer begged. "Time worketh all things. We must make haste slowly in this matter. A proper inquest is in order, when a proper examination must be made, and so the law—the law, I say—can be brought to bear upon—"

"Wind!" cried Keeler. "Here is my pard, dead, and I want him avenged! I'll give one thousand dollars to the man who will point out his murderer to me!"

"I'm your man," cried Bungle. "I'm after that reward, hot. All I ask is time, sir, time."

"Well, take time, but don't make it Eternity."

The case made a great sensation, as can be imagined. The camp stopped work, and the citizens thronged the Square all the forenoon.

An inquest was held, after a fashion, and an examination of the body was made. The deed had been done with the same weapon, evidently, with which Banton had been killed. But, no weapon was to be found, and there was no clew, same as in the other case.

The citizens—hard citizens as most of them were, were made afraid.

Whose turn would it be next?

CHAPTER XI.

BUNGLER'S BUNGLER.

THE forenoon having been passed in idleness, as said, the citizens were in no mood for work during the afternoon, and they did none.

The murdered man was buried, for your wild camp has no use for dead men around, they being neither useful nor ornamental; and after

that duty had been performed the crowd set about taking on appropriate jags of jig-water.

Lawyer Bungle was going from place to place about the camp, like a tireless bloodhound, trying to ferret out the murderer, but so far without much success.

By this time nearly everybody was making fun of his efforts, for he had shown himself a thoroughly incompetent shyster.

The Irish tinker, the Dutch peddler, and the colored barber, were plying their trades in peace.

The bummer, Mr. Kolt, was idling his time away basking in the sun.

On the piazza of the hotel, toward the close of the day, the mayor, with a group around him, was holding forth again concerning the murder.

"I tell ye what," he observed, "if that 'ar Deadwood Dick is in town, as that feller said last night, I wish he'd show himself an take charge of this hyer case and make somethin' out of et."

"What do you imagine his business here can be?" questioned White George.

"That's what gits me, pard. Thar ain't nothin' ter draw him hyer, that I know of, unless et was the other murder."

"If he is here, he must be in disguise," said Bob Keeler.

"And it's pretty certain we have none of that sort in town," spoke up Manager Armstrong.

"Are ye right sure, Keeler, that Hokley hadn't no enemy?"

The mayor had asked the same thing at least a dozen times before.

"I am sure he had none," was the answer. "That is, as sure as I can be, and I don't think he had many secrets from me."

"Then et's mighty queer who killed him. Men don't kill other men like that without some powerful reason ter back et up. What that reason was in this case is more than I kin cipher out."

At that moment Lawyer Bungle came out from the hall.

"Gentlemen," he said, "see here."

All looked, and in the lawyer's hand was seen a long, broad knife.

"Thunder!" ejaculated Old Hink, the proprietor. "That's our kitchen carver, Mr. Bungle."

"I know it is, sir," was the important answer. "It is also the weapon with which that man was killed last night."

Everybody looked amazed.

"How do ye know et was?" demanded the mayor.

"Because it is the only weapon in the camp as wide as the wound in the dead man's breast."

"That is slim proof," said Mr. Armstrong.

"It might be, alone," was the lawyer's very important rejoinder. "I happen to have now the knowledge of a motive for the deed."

"Hal! what was it?"

"Who done et?"

"The motive, gentlemen of the jur—I mean simple gentlemen—er—a—that is, gentlemen simply; the motive was, revenge, and the murderer is the cook of this establishment, one Ned Nooks."

The lawyer swelled up importantly as he made the charge, and looked around for some one to challenge his position.

"Ned Nooks!" cried the mayor.

"My cook!" chimed the landlord.

"Absurd," sneered Mr. Armstrong.

"But, I have the motive—the motive, gentlemen of—er—sim—that is, gentlemen; I have a reasonable motive for the crime, and Ned Nooks is the man. I have solved the mystery; I claim the rewards."

"See here," cried Keeler. "If you know anything, spit it out."

"If I know anything! I tell you I have a clear case, gen—that is, a clear case. Hokley had insulted Nooks, and Nooks had vowed to fix him. He has done it, and here is the weapon he did it with."

He brandished the knife.

"You're a fool!" cried Keeler. "Hokley never insulted Nooks, and Nooks is not the sort of fellow to do a deed like this, anyhow."

"Of course he ain't," agreed the mayor.

"He wouldn't harm a cat; would he, Hink?"

"No, ner half a cat; not even a quarter."

"Wrong, all wrong," persisted the lawyer, shaking his head. "I will lay my case before you, when your calm judgment must decide it."

Yesterday morning Mr. Hokley found fault with his meat. He called Nooks, and in the presence of all told him he was not worthy the powder to blow him up, or words to that effect. Nooks responded that Hokley was hard to please, and retreated to his domain muttering

threats. All this I learned, and upon going to the kitchen to interview Nooks, I espied this knife. You see the blade is just the width of the wound. Ergo; Nooks is the man!"

"Waal, you darn fool!" exploded the mayor.

"You howling idiot!" cried Keeler.

"Hal! hal! hal!" laughed Armstrong. "That is the richest I ever heard."

"You don't agree with me!" queried the lawyer, greatly amazed. "Don't you see the evidence is perfect?"

"I see an infernal jassack," retorted the mayor, "and that's yourself. Why, Nooks wouldn't kill a baby, let alone a full-grown man. He don't even kill ther bugs in ther kitchen."

"Call him here," suggested White George.

The landlord went to bring the suspected man to the front.

Presently he returned, followed by a lean, lanky youth, one who did not seem to have spirit enough to speak for his dinner.

"See hyer, Nooks," the mayor turned upon him, "did you kill Ike Hokley?"

The poor fellow almost fainted then and there. He turned ghastly white, his knees gimbled under him, and he had to grab the railing for support.

"N—n—n—no!" he gasped.

"Hal!" cried the lawyer. See his paleness! See him tremble! Sir, didn't you kill Isaac Hokley with this knife?"

"I—I—didn't do it, I didn't do it," the fellow declared. "I wouldn't do a thing like that; I couldn't do it."

"O'course ye didn't," the mayor said, much to his relief. "Lawyer, you ar' no good. 'Low me ter pint out one little diffikilty in ther way o' your theory, will ye?"

"Yes, sir; if you can."

"Waal, do ye observe ther length of this hyer knife? Ef it had been used, and ther blow struck as hard as we know poor Hokley was struck, wouldn't it 'a' gone clean through him, and more?"

Mr. Bungle hadn't thought of that, evidently.

"Possibly it might," he admitted, "but—"

"No but about et. You ar' a howlin' idiot. Nooks, go back to yer kitchen an' take yer bread-slicer with ye. Lawyer, git out o' my sight."

Those around laughed, and the lawyer went off, muttering to himself. He had succeeded in making an 'ass of himself, which, had they known it, had been his object from the first.

Now little attention would be paid to him and his movements.

By night a good portion of the camp was pretty thoroughly drunk, and the whole place was in an uproar.

Supper was over, the stage had arrived without anything of importance attending, and now there was nothing to be done but for the rabble to get up some excitement on their own account.

Little had been seen of Fearless Fan during the day.

The excitement of the forenoon had made it impossible, or nearly so, for her to exercise the privilege the mayor had granted her.

And, too, little had been seen of the man whom she had so thoroughly subdued on the previous evening. He was around now, however, and was one of the leaders with the drunken rabble.

About the usual hour White George opened his game in the Sarcophagus.

The former proprietor, Sportive Sport, was on hand, and was one of the first to take his seat.

As he did so, he deposited two bags of gold coin upon the table in front of him, emptying out a part of the contents of one, remarking:

"Now, it is either make or break with me. What is the limit of your game, Mr. Dealer?"

"Five million dollars," was the quiet answer.

Sportive Sport was seen to start, and others looked at the cool dealer intently.

"You can't mean it," the ex-proprietor gasped.

"If not, I would not have said so," the cool sport declared.

"Then, by hash, you ar' Deadwood Dick!" So cried a voice, and Wild Ward, half drunk or more, pushed his way to the front.

"You here again?" demanded the sport.

"Yas, I'm hyer again," was the retort, "an' I'm hyer on business this time, too, you bet!"

He reached for a weapon, but before he could draw it the sport had him covered with his own. And, not only so, but Fearless Fan, just behind him, placed the nose of a cold tube behind his ear.

"Go slow," the young woman said softly.

"He had better," warned the sport. "You seem bent upon protecting me, lady. I can only thank you."

"I do so because I know you are mistaken for another," was the answer.

"Yer lie!" cried the baffled rascal. "Ye ar' in cahoots! He is Deadwood Dick an' you ar' his wife!"

The crowd seemed to awaken to the truth, now.

"That's et," cried one man. "Haven't we heard about that darin' wife pard of his?"

"See here, White George," demanded the mayor, "is this hyer so, or ain't et? What's ther use of bein' in disguise in a friendly camp?"

"I have told you, gentlemen, that I am not Deadwood Dick," was the reply. "I can do no more than that. Besides, this lady has said so, and she has told you she is acquainted with Deadwood Dick."

"Wull, what ar' ye goin' ter do wi' me?" growled the prisoner. "Ye had better make cold meat of me while ye kin, fer I'm on ther war-path now, fer fair. I know ye, and I'm goin' ter settle my 'count with ye, ef I git half a show ter do et, you bet!"

CHAPTER XII.

SOME PASSING EVENTS.

THAT the crowd looked upon White George as Deadwood Dick, there was now no denying.

The mention of Fearless Fan as his wife seemed to have settled that opinion in the minds of all, for wherever the fame of Deadwood Dick was known, in that country, his wife shared it.

"Nevertheless, you do not know me," the sport urged, "for I am not Deadwood Dick. As to what we will do with you, I think the mayor can take care of you. Mayor, I look to you for protection from this crazy fellow, since you have assured me that I am in a friendly camp."

"An' ye shall have et, too!" the mayor cried. "Boys, jest take this hyer galoot an' tie him up some'rs. I'll have et known th' t I am mayor of this burg, an' that I won't have no sech work goin' on ef I know et. Away with him!"

"Let me fight him!" cried the prisoner. "Let me stand up to him, man to man, an' see ef I can't drop him. Et's his life or mine, fer this kentry ain't big nuff ter hold us both."

"You are crazy drunk," said the sport. "I wish the genuine Deadwood Dick would show himself and give you what you are itching for."

"Then you come out an' do et, fer you ar' ther man."

"I declare again that I am not."

Three or four men had now laid hold upon Wild Ward, at the mayor's bidding, and he was hustled out of the saloon in short order.

"That settles him," the mayor observed. "Now, let this hyer game begin, fer I am anxious ter see ther 'citement."

"Very well, sir, you shall see it, if there is any to be seen," the sport made reply.

There was but one point of attraction in the saloon, now.

The game commenced, and Sportive Sport was the only player. No one else entered with him.

His first stake was one of five hundred dollars, playing the glittering gold coins in lieu of chips. He was pale, but his hands were steady.

The cards were drawn, and the player lost.

We will not follow step by step the progress of the game. The final result is all we care for.

For two hours or thereabouts it progressed, and at the end of that time all of Sportive Sport's gold had passed over to the keeping of White George. And it was no small sum.

"Luck is against you," the dealer quietly remarked.

"Yes, by Harry, so it is," was the snarl in response. "But, I am not done yet, all the same."

"You have more capital, then?"

"If I haven't I know where to get it. I'll be back in two minutes."

He rose and went out, and in less time than he had named he was back again with two more bags of the precious coins.

He resumed his seat, and the play began anew.

The ex-proprietor was cool, but his face was red, the veins standing out upon his forehead showing that he was in a rage of suppressed passion.

As before, he lost steadily.

While the play was going on this time, and while the whole camp, almost, was looking on with intense interest, two men without were in earnest conversation, standing in the shadow at the side of the saloon.

One of these had handed Sport the gold.
 "There don't seem to be any doubt about it," one was saying.
 "So I think," agreed the other. "The man is undoubtedly Deadwood Dick, as that fellow declared."

"And if it is he—"
 "We know what he wants here."
 "Sure. His words at the table there proved it."

"Saying that the limit of the game was five millions. Yes; that was all the proof we needed."

"Well, what is to be done?"
 "There is only one thing to be done, and that is—"

He did not finish in words, but by a sign which the other understood.

"You are right, and it shall be done, too. But, what about the woman? Rough on her."

"She is as bad as the man, if she is really his wife, and as much to be feared, too. She must be disposed of, somehow. An accidental shot would do it."

"It's the only way, I guess. It is a case that means one thing or the other, for us, and the sooner we take it in hand and do the fellow up, the better. What is the plan?"

They talked in low tones, then, and for a considerable time, when they parted.

After that, men were seen to leave the saloon, singly and by twos, until a goodly force of them had gone out, the worst characters the camp could show.

It was seen, but whether any particular attention was paid to it or not did not appear.

The game was still in progress, and now Sportive Sport was winning.

Some other players had dropped in by this time, too, strangers to the camp, it appeared.

One of these was a rough-looking teamster in rough attire, whose face indicated that he had been recently under the hands of the camp's new barber.

He was a quiet man, and was risking only small sums in a quiet way, and little attention was given to him. Low down on the front of his red shirt, where his vest almost hid it, was a diamond pin with two stones.

Behind him stood Lawyer Bungle, evidently deeply interested in the game; or, it might have been, simply feasting his eyes upon the display of wealth.

The others of the players, fellows of ordinary dress, wore diamond pins, one having a pin with four stones and the other a single one.

Had any one noted it, the pins represented the spots of a die, the only missing one being the tray.

But, it was something that was not noticed, save by those concerned.

The woman, Fearless Fan, was still there. She was not playing, but was standing near the table, almost opposite to the dealer and not far from Lawyer Bungle.

Presently there came an excited stir near the front of the room, and there was a call for Milton Armstrong.

"Here I am," the mine manager responded, from his place near the table.

He had only recently come in, after having been out for some time, and was watching the game closely, in company with his superintendent, Keeler.

"Hyer's yer darter wants ter see ye," a man called out.

A young woman was pushing her way through the crowd, and presently she came to where the manager sat.

She was not bad-looking, but had a hard, worn look that did not by any means suit her station.

"What is it, Eva?" the manager asked.

"Oh! papa!" she exclaimed, with excitement that seemed forced, "that horrid Dutch peddler has broken into our house, and he must be robbing us, I think."

"The Dutch peddler?" cried the manager.

He exchanged a quick look with Keeler, and the latter cried:

"I'll Dutch peddle him, if he is there yet. I'll go back with your daughter, Mr. Armstrong. Half a dozen of you men come with me, and catch the rascal if you can. He won't be hard to find."

"I'll go with you," the manager declared.

"And so will I," cried the mayor of the camp. "We'll hang the cuss, if we git him to rights."

These three, with half a dozen or more of the employees of the mine from out the crowd, set off at once, the young woman returning with them.

The play had stopped for the moment, but it

was resumed as soon as the momentary interruption had ended.

Sportive Sport's luck seemed to change, shortly, and again he was on the losing side. His face was clouded, and a desperate expression seemed to come into his eyes as he played.

It was some time after the going out of the mine-manager and those with him, that another stranger entered the saloon.

He was a keen-eyed man, with smooth face, clad in ordinary attire, and he seemed to saunter in as though with no especial interest further than to see what might be going on.

He made his way to the faro-table, where he looked idly on at the game.

Like some of the others, he wore a diamond pin. It had three stones in it, in a row from left to right.

The Dutch peddler was not likely to be found by those who had gone out in quest of him, as more than one man present could have predicted, after the coming in of this man.

The Sportive Sport lost steadily, and the hour was growing late.

"In half an hour more I shall close the game for the night," the dealer made announcement.

"Make your play, gentlemen."

"It will be closed sooner, if I lose this turn," grated Sportive Sport.

His face had settled into a hard, white expression of desperation, and he made his last play, with cold calculation.

He had been watching the run of the cards closely, and had been playing where calculation had shown the player's best chance to lie, but he had lost steadily. This was his last effort, and he staked all he had.

A turn of a card, and he had—lost!

With a lightning move he drew a revolver from under the table, and—

But, it did not happen. White George might have died then and there, but a friendly hand interposed.

It was Lawyer Bungle who grasped the fellow's wrist, with a grip of steel, and in a show of greatest excitement and consternation, he gasped:

"My goodness, Mister Sport, don't do anything like that. You must not kill yourself! Fortune may be ready to smile upon you again to-morrow, as has been the case many a time before."

With a quick movement the lawyer had disarmed him.

Feeling that his real intention had not been discovered, the Sportive Sport smiled and accepted the situation.

"I don't know whether I ought to thank you or not, lawyer," he remarked, "but you have saved my life. Well, the game is ended, all the same, so far as I am concerned."

He rose from the table.

"I'm sorry for your bad run of luck, friend," said White George. "If you will accept it, I'll give you a stake of a few thousands."

"No, by great!" was the refusal. "I'll try you once more, to-morrow night, and then if my luck is the same I'll take care that I carry out what I tried to do a moment ago."

Just then the mayor, Armstrong, Keeler and the others returned.

CHAPTER XIII.

THRILLING MOMENTS.

"HELLO! did you get the peddler?" asked Sportive Sport, turning at once to them and seeming glad of the chance to change the subject.

"No; he ain't ter be found nowhere," answered the mayor. "Have you gone broke, Sporty?"

"That's what's the matter with me."

"The deuce!" exclaimed Armstrong. "You are in hard luck, Bondell. If you require another stake, I'll back you."

"Not to-night, thank you. I have had enough."

"See here," demanded Keeler, "has this been a square game, boys?"

"Have you seen anything crooked about it?" immediately challenged White George, who was taking up his winnings.

"No, I have not," Keeler admitted, "but it seems strange that a player like Sportive Sport should be on the losing side so long. We don't know you, further than we have had from your own lips."

"That is true; but if any one has seen cheating, let him step forward and say so. If it can be proved, I'll surrender every cent I have won."

"So far as that is concerned," said Sportive Sport, "I think the game has been a square one. I am no child at it, and I have watched closely."

"As you had the right to do, sir," observed the dealer. "When I play, whether as banker

or player, the game has got to be a square one. It has certainly been all in my favor, though."

He had now taken up his winnings, and rose from the table.

The other players had already left their places, and were standing near Lawyer Bungle.

What should have happened, then, did not take place according to programme, for just at the critical moment there was a wild whoop at the door, and a crowd of men, with weapons flourishing, bounded into the room.

At their head was Wild Ward, who had somehow escaped.

"Thar he is," he cried, pointing at White George. "Take him, and we'll make short work of him."

Forward they rushed, their weapons to the front, and the way was cleared for them as they came on.

"Up with yer hands, this hyer time," cried Wild Ward. "Ther jig is up wi' you now, an' thar's no gettin' out of et. Ther man what draws a pop gits a dose o' lead."

White George had been caught with the bags of gold in his hands, and before he could drop them and draw his revolver, it was too late.

There were some thirty or more of the intruders, and each was armed.

Most of them were more or less drunk, and it could be seen at a glance that they would hold life cheap.

"Well, what do you want?" the cool sport asked.

"We want you, that's what," was the answer. "Up with yer hands, or you'll git a pull right hyer!"

The sport obeyed, raising his hands with the bags of coin in his grasp.

"Oh! ye kin hold on to ther boodle, ef ye want to," was sneered. "We'll take keer of that after we have taken keer of you. Lay onto him, fellers."

Wild Ward advanced a step himself, and two or three others stepped forward with him to carry out his order.

"Let me out of here!" suddenly cried Lawyer Bungle. "Let me out of here!"

With his words he made a dash to get past the armed men, evidently, and in his mad haste he ran against Wild Ward with force enough to knock him almost off his balance.

It was all that was needed; it was something to give White George a chance to act, and the sport did act, promptly.

With sudden energy he dashed the bags of coin at the head of Wild Ward and the man nearest him, and the next instant his revolvers were out and he was ready.

"Now, curse you, try it again!" he cried, savagely.

"Don't shoot! Don't shoot!" cried Lawyer Bungle. "Let me get out of here before the shooting begins!"

He was dashing this way and that, as if trying to find a way out, while all the time men were going down before him like ninepins, sent to the floor by the force of his quiet blows.

White George had now his weapons against the head of Wild Ward, and the latter was somewhat subdued.

The others, by this time, were acting.

The men of the Diamond Dice, except the six-spot, had their weapons in hand, and the mayor of the camp was with them.

It looked as though Wild Ward and his gang had run up against a snag.

Fearless Fan, too, was one who stood ready for the fray, a pair of glittering five-shooters held in her firm hands.

"Hold on, lawyer, hold on!" cried the mayor. "Don't kill 'em all! What ar'ye doin', anyhow?"

"I want to get out and I must get out," the lawyer cried. "Please don't begin to shoot, good gentlemen, till I have got outside."

"There will be no shooting, I guess, sir."

This from the sport.

"Eh? What's that?"

The lawyer stopped suddenly and looked around.

"Bless me," he observed, "I thought everybody was going to begin at once, and I was quite alarmed."

Those whom he had downed were up again, more or less dazed by what had happened. They looked at the lawyer in amazement.

"I thought ye was goin' ter clear out ther hull darn ranch," said the mayor. "You seem ter be a snorter, when ye let yerself loose. Didn't know but a whirlwind had got in hyer."

"Really, I was not aware what I was doing," the lawyer assured. "If I have pushed anybody rudely, I'm sure I beg pardon."

At that there was a laugh.

"Well, mayor, what is to be done with this fellow?" asked the sport.

"We orter hang him, cuss him!" was the angry response.

"May I suggest something?" asked Fearless Fan.

"Sartain you may."

"Well, let the sport say what shall be done with him."

"D'ye hear that?" cried the prisoner. "Say they ain't workin' together? It is Deadwood Dick an' his wife, an' I know et!"

"I assure you you are wrong; but, even were it so, what would this camp have against us?" the cool sport declared and demanded.

"I'll tell ye what," the prisoner retorted. "I have told ye 'bout a letter I seen at Bristol City. Deadwood Dick has come hyer to gobble up five million dollars that's s'posed to be hyer, that's what!"

The cat was out!

"Do you think Deadwood Dick is an outlaw? a robber?" cried Fearless Fan.

"Et ain't that; this money is s'posed ter be stolen, an' he has come hyer ter find et. Boys, ar' ye goin' ter let him do et? Think of ther sum!"

"But, this hyer must be a mistake," cried the mayor. "I never heerd nothin' of et. He must be barkin' up ther wrong tree, or else you be."

The crowd, the evil portion of it—and that meant fully four-fifths of the men in the room, was wild.

If there was such a sum of money as that about, they all wanted a share of it.

The six detectives saw that their case was lost, unless something was done at once to change the tide in their favor.

Should the leaders take advantage of this moment, if they saw the chance, they could command the aid of nearly every man in the camp. Would they see and recognize this as their opportunity?

The detectives had already worked out their case, and were on the point of making their arrests when their plans were upset by the attack of Wild Ward and his backers.

Deadwood Dick himself was for the moment at loss.

He did not know of a single man in the camp he could trust, unless possibly it was the mayor.

From what he had been able to learn of him, by close observation, he believed that he was an honest man who somehow had got into the office by mistake.

That he was not in the secret of the great robbery was almost certain.

"Hang ther detective!" the crowd yelled.

"If thar's that much money hyer, we kin take keer of et!"

"You bet we kin!"

These, and a hundred other cries, were heard on every side, and the evil crowd was pressing forward.

White George, the sport, sprung upon the table.

"Silence!" he shouted, waving his revolvers. "Let me have a word with you before you go too far with this business."

The crowd became still in a moment, all eager to hear what he had to say.

"I want to tell you again that I am not Deadwood Dick," he spoke. "If you do away with me, thinking you have got him, you will make a big mistake. That is all I have to say; and now, if you are bound to have me, come on!"

Armstrong and Keeler had been whispering together, and now Keeler sprung upon the other end of the same table with White.

"Men of Death's-head Camp!" he shouted, "the time has come for us to take you into our confidence and let you into our secrets. There is five millions of gold in this camp, and we rely on you to help us defend it. You heard this man say the limit of his game to-night was five millions, didn't you?"

"That's so!"

"Swing him up!"

"Then bring out the swag and divvy!"

What Deadwood Dick had dreaded, had come to pass. The ringleaders were going to take the whole wild horde of the camp for their backing.

"And it is proof enough that he is Deadwood Dick, in spite of all he says," Keeler went on. "We must hang him, and his backers, if any can be found; and then the gold will be brought out and you shall all have a share of it. It will make this camp more than rich, and every man of you will be a prince. Rid your camp of these detectives, and—"

"And begin right here," cried Armstrong, as he aimed his revolver squarely at White George.

White George had been on the point of open-

ing fire, but a signal from Dick had deterred him.

With a single leap Lawyer Bungle was upon the solid faro table, between White and the Sportive Sport, with a revolver placed at the head of the latter.

"Men of Death's-Head," he cried, "just go a little slow. This is the only man in the camp who knows the hiding-place of that gold, and if you make another move I will blow his brains out. I am Deadwood Dick!"

CHAPTER XIV.

COOL-HEADED DICK!

FOR the moment Deadwood Dick held the vantage.

Had there been a majority of honest men for him to have appeal to, he could have carried his point from that moment.

Well he knew, though, that appeal was useless, for the most of the citizens were all that has been said of them, and more. He had but one hope, to work upon their cupidity.

For the moment they were at a standstill, filled with surprise at the unexpected revelation.

"And," Fearless Fan had immediately added, "if I have the name I may as well claim the game, too. At the sign of an attack, off goes this rascal's roof!"

She had clapped a revolver to the ear of Manager Armstrong.

The brief hesitation was more than Dick had hoped to gain, and it gave him a chance for a quick decision of action.

At a signal from him, Detective Mason and the others of the diamond dice instantly laid hands upon the men they had intended arresting, and handcuffs were upon their wrists before they knew it.

This was a further surprise that held the rough crowd in check still longer, and time was gained.

Mason had handcuffed Keeler, Hardy had done the same for Armstrong, Cooley had performed the same office for the Sportive Sport, while Martin, who had been the bummer, Ken-naka Kolt, had served Wild Ward in a similar fashion.

And there the four were, beautifully helpless for the time being.

They had not submitted silently, however, for they had been uttering all manner of threats and curses, at the same time calling upon the crowd to defend them.

There were shouts, now, on every hand, impossible to quote.

And if there was a surprised man in the camp, that man was Mayor Corrigan, who had to this time looked on with wide-open mouth.

"What in ther name o' disasters does all this hyer mean, anyhow?" he now demanded. "Lawyer Bungle, you infarnel jassack, do you mean ter lay claim ter bein' ther great detective, Deadwood Dick?"

"I certainly do, mayor," Dick answered.

And in proof of it, he took off his hat and with a sweep of his hand removed wig, beard and spectacles at once.

The redoubtable Richard stood forth!

"By 'fernal! I know ye!" cried Wild Ward, hotly. "Why couldn't I 'a' knowed et was you before? You would now be a deader, I swear et."

"Maybe so," spoke Fearless Fan, coolly. "I have been around, you rascal, and perhaps I would have had something to say about that. And it would have been the same on the part of these gentlemen. You could not have harmed a hair of Deadwood Dick's head."

"Woman, who are you?" asked Detective Mason.

"One who is on your side in this case, is all I will say now."

There was no time to say more, for, the frantic urgings made by Keeler and Armstrong were arousing the crowd.

The rascals were pushing forward, growling like wild beasts, and it would require but another touch of the lash to make them rend their natural prey—if they could.

"Hold!" commanded Deadwood Dick, in stentorian tone. "The man among you who advances another step, dies. You have the advantage of numbers, but we hold the drop, and I am good for the lives of a dozen or so of you, myself."

That checked and cowed them, for the moment.

The detective at the same time gagged their prisoners, to still them so that Dick could make himself heard. The tube of a threatening revolver had been thrust into the mouth of each.

"Men of Death's-Head," Dick immediately went on, taking advantage of the moment of

respite, "I want you to listen to what I have to tell you. We are here on business, as you can see, and we will stand no trifling. You hold your lives in your own hands, for every man of us is a sure shot with the pistol."

There was a hum of mutterings, at that.

"The story this rascal," indicating Wild Ward, "has told you, is true in the main, I will give you the facts of the case, briefly. There has been a robbery, and a large sum of money stolen from the Government. It has been tracked to this camp, and we are here to reclaim it. We have found it, and we will take it with us if we have to wade in blood to do it. Now, I have a proposition to make to you. Are you willing to listen to it?"

The hum abated a little, showing that they were willing to hear.

"Very well; but, first, I want every man in this room who is willing to aid us in our work, to step over to our side here. I want to know just how many friends we have among you."

Jim-jam Joe was busy among the men, whispering here and there, and his words were being passed from lip to lip.

At Dick's call, the first man to respond was the mayor.

He faced the crowd boldly, with weapons drawn, and called out:

"Hyer is one ye kin count on, anyhow; an' I sh'd think thar orter be some more besides me. White men of this hyer camp, whar ar' ye?"

At that, some three or four others stepped out from the crowd and cast their lot with the determined few.

"I am glad to find so many honest men among you," said Dick, then. "Now, the rest of you, listen to me: If you will sell your help to us, we will pay you a fair price for it. If not, it is war! Now, make up your minds which you will have."

"How much will it pay?" asked Jim-jam Joe.

"Five dollars to each and every man."

There was a shout of derision, at that. Such an offer was not to be thought of.

"We jest won't do et," Jim-jam announced. "Ther' is five millions layin' round hyer som'ers, an' we're goin' ter have ther hull of et. You hev showed yer teeth, an' we ar' goin' ter show ours. Besides, that pard o' yours thar has got a cool couple o' hundred thousand in his clothes, and you must take us for fools ef ye think we ar' goin' ter let ye git away with that, when we ar' ten to one 'gainst ye."

The horde of them roared like tigers, at that.

"Hold!" Dick shouted again. "If you advance one step, this man dies!"

"Kill him an' be darn!" retorted Jim-jam. "We would only have ter do et, anyhow, ter git rid of him."

Dick removed his weapon from the mouth of the chief of the rascals, and covered Jim-jam himself.

"I'll kill you, then," he declared. "Stop where you are, men, till you hear all I have to say."

His backers now ranged themselves in line, and their weapons covered the crowd.

"And the first man of you who lifts his arm shoul'ar high, drops!"

So added Detective Mason.

"They dare not kill one of you!" shouted Keeler. "Go for them, and the whole boodle shall be yours."

With a sweep of his arm Dick knocked him off the table, and with a weapon in each hand, faced the crowd like the tiger he was.

"You will have war, will you?" he cried.

"Very well, war let it be. I have been in worse holes than this and have come out alive. I'll risk it here. Just count your chances before you are too basty. Here are a good dozen of us against you, and every one with a brace of revolvers covering you. That means a hundred and twenty bullets ready to be poured into you the moment you move. Do you want them?"

Putting it in that light, the crowd recoiled a little.

"But, what will we be doin' all that time?" cried Jim-jam. "You won't fire a dozen shots 'fore every one of ye will be laid out stiff."

"Every one of that dozen will count, though," Dick retorted. And then, in his grim tone of command, he suddenly ordered:

"Form yourselves in double line, every man of you. The one to refuse dies in his tracks."

Before aware of it, fully two-thirds of the crowd had obeyed.

It was their fatal move, and Dick immediately took advantage of it. He leaped from the table, facing those nearest him, and cried again:

"Fall in, there, or I'll drop you!"

The cowards slunk back before him, and in less than half a minute they were in two double lines the length of room.

"Now, hands up! every mother's son of you!" Dick further ordered. "Hands up, weapons in plain sight! And the man who steps out of his place in line dies!"

"He's trapped us!" cried Jim-jam Joe. "Now is our time ter wipe—"

He sprung from his place in line, as he spoke, and would have opened the battle, but a bullet from Dick's revolver laid him low.

The situation was a desperate one, and desperate means had to be employed. It was a matter of life or death for the Big Six and their few friends, and there could be no trifling.

"Next!" Dick grated. "If any other man wants it, let him step out!"

No one accepted the invitation, however.

Master of the situation, now, Deadwood Dick was prompt to act.

He directed two of his men to pass along the lines and take away the weapons from the ruffianly crew, and the work was begun immediately.

Barely had it been begun, however, when some thoughtful rascal in the crowd whispered to his neighbor, word was quickly passed to the rear, and the moment it reached the last man, action was taken.

The last men in the line turned suddenly, and making a dash for the doors, were out in a second.

And after them went the others, in mad haste, and before the stampede could be checked fully a third of the rascals had made good their escape.

It was checked, though, for the weapons of the detective spoke sharply and deadly, and the doorway was blocked with wounded men. It had to be a game of shoot, there was no avoiding it.

"Hands up!" Deadwood Dick commanded again, and the cowed wretches obeyed.

They were now speedily disarmed, and the doors were closed and secured against attack from without.

The windows were fitted with heavy wooden shutters, and the few of these that were open were speedily closed in, and so ended the trouble for the time.

Those who had been disarmed were cowering in one corner of the room, under the guard of a couple of detectives clustered around Deadwood Dick.

"You are well named the Prince of the West," said Mason, offering his hand. "I thought we were in a death-trap that time, and so it would have proved, but for you."

Dick smiled.

"It was pretty hot, that's the fact," he admitted. "And, it is not done with yet, by a good deal. Before we go another step, however, I am determined to know one thing. Lady," turning upon Fearless Fan, "who and what are you?"

For answer, the woman caught Dick's right hand in both of hers, crying:

"Dick! Dear, brave, noble Dick! Did you not recognize me, truly? It is I, Kate, your wife!"

CHAPTER XV.

IN A DESPERATE FIX.

DEADWOOD DICK had caught his wife to his breast before her words were ended.

"No, Kate, I did not know you," he said. "I half suspected, but you disarmed my suspicions. Truly, you are the Queen of Disguise."

"It was because you did not look for me, mainly," Kodak Kate rejoined. "You thought me at Bristol City, with our dear baby boy in my arms. Do you imagine I could remain there longer, and you facing such fearful dangers?"

"Not even for little Dick?"

"Not even for him! But, you may be sure I left him in good hands. It was my assumed change of voice that deceived you, together with this darkened skin and this hideous scar across my face. You may be sure I took care with my make-up."

She laughed the merry laugh Dick knew so well.

"You deceived me, I admit it," Dick confessed. "Your pretended search for a man named Kennet, too, was a piece of work that disarmed me."

"It was done for that purpose. I wanted to test my disguise thoroughly, and so I came here with that story, where I could be face to face with you and so see if you would know me."

"You did well, Kate; but, dear, think of the risk you have run! I can never trust you alone again."

"You need not do so. My place is by your side, and where you are, there will I be found. We will face dangers together."

"Mason," and Dick turned to his fellow detective, "let me introduce you to the best, the bravest, the truest wife a man ever had. This is Kodak Kate of whom you have heard."

The introduction was acknowledged, suitably, and some minutes more were spent in conversation, in which all took part.

Dick soon came again to the business in hand.

"We are in a dangerous trap here," he said. "We are not out of the woods by any means. We must look well to our safety."

"Will we leave the saloon?" asked Mason.

"Not by any means. Some of us would surely be shot down, and I will not allow my wife to take further risks—"

"See, I have hampered you already," cried Kate, regretfully. "Why will you not forget what I am to you, Dick, and look upon me as only your pard in danger? I am willing—"

"I know you are, too willing. But, I would act the same in this instance, even were you not here. No; we must keep under the shelter of the saloon till daylight, at least, and then we will try in some manner to overcome these rascals and make good our escape."

All this time the handcuffed men, Keeler, Armstrong, Sportive Sport and Wild Ward, had been talking together.

Keeler now spoke to Dick.

"Deadwood Dick," he said, "you have got us dead to rights, and there is no way out of it for us. You have not got the money, however, and never can find it without our help. Let us go, and we will show you where it is."

"Did you ever hear of Deadwood Dick selling out like that?" Dick asked.

"But, you want the money."

"And we know where to put our hands on it, too, New Jesse. Hal you give a start because I know you? I might surprise you more than that, I think."

"I don't see how."

The outlaw spoke with that cold daring for which he had become noted in so short a time.

"Well, I will tell you, then: My by-play about accusing the cook at the hotel of the murder of Banton and Moxley was all a farce, as you can now understand. It was done to add strength to my assumed character. I could have laid my hand on the actual murderer at that time."

The man had grown more pale than before.

"I don't believe it," he said.

"Don't you? Well, that murderer was *yourself*. You—"

"You lie!" fiercely.

"I speak the truth. Banton and Hokley were both concerned with you in this great robbery, and by putting them out of the way you would have all the more for your own share. In fact, it was your plan to have it all."

"You lie! You lie!"

"Oh, no; I have the facts straight enough. It was your intention to do away with Armstrong and Bordell in the same fashion—"

"What!" cried Armstrong. "Had you that thought in your mind, Tom Horsehead?"

"Tom Horsehead?" exclaimed Dick. "By heavens, Mason, we have made a richer haul than we thought!"

"You are right. Mr. Armstrong, if that is your name, and I very much doubt it now, you have the thanks of the Government, through me."

"And if this is Horsehead, were not the other two, Banton and Hokley, his confederates—Bill Radlay and Hank Mander? This is growing interesting, truly."

"Yes, that's just who they were," declared Armstrong. "Give me a chance, and I'll peach on them all, that is, all that's left of the gang. I'll fix you, Horsehead, for your intention to murder me!"

"We'll think about that," said Dick. "For the present, enough. We have something else to think about."

The handcuffed prisoners were then given seats in a corner, and Dick turned to the horde of men in the other corner.

"You fellows need not huddle together there like sheep," he said. "There is the bar; go in and help yourselves to what you want. I'll treat you better than you would have treated me."

"Hooray!" yelled one man. "I'll be the barkeeper, an' I'll drink with ye every time, pards! Come on!"

They made a mad rush for the bar, and in another moment were filling themselves with the poisons there on tap.

"Are you not afraid of that move?" asked Mason, rather apprehensively.

"Why?" asked Dick.

"They may give us trouble when they get crazy."

"I expect they will, but they are disarmed, and we can quell them. After they pass that stage they will sleep like logs."

"That's true; but it's an unpleasant place for your wife."

"I admit it, but there is no help for it. Better to have so many the less to deal with."

"Think not of me," Kate spoke up. "Conduct the case just as you would were I a man and a fellow detective with you. I can bear my part, never fear."

"We have no fear on that score, Mrs. Bristol."

Dick then held a whispered consultation with his men and their allies.

The result of it was, that Detectives Coke, Hardy, and Cooley left the saloon by the rear door.

Outside, in front of the saloon, was now an angry, howling mob, and trouble from that quarter was momentarily expected.

Dick had hoped that this trouble might be averted long enough for the rascals within to drink themselves stupid, but in that he was disappointed. Barely had the detectives gone out by the rear way, when there came a crash against the front doors.

"Now we are in for it," Dick cried.

"A few more blows like that," said Mason, "and they will be in upon us."

"The door will be blocked again with their bodies, if they do break in," was Dick's grim rejoinder.

"And this end of the room will be strewn with ours."

Dick looked at his wife.

There she was, as fearless as himself, with her weapons ready.

The crowd at the bar had stopped their drinking for the moment, and were talking together.

"The man who makes a move to open that door, dies," Dick warned.

"We ain't goin' ter do that," was the response from one man. "We ain't got no more of this hyer stuff than we want ourselves."

Dick caught at the straw.

"Then you will have to defend it," he cried.

"Lay hold upon that bar, every man who can, and place it before the door. If you don't, they'll have it away from you in no time!"

It was enough.

With only that single idea in their addled minds, they barricaded the door in haste, and for the time being the danger was held off.

"I must speak to them," cried Dick. "I'll do it from the loft. Hold the fort till we see what effect that will have on them. I will be back again in a few minutes."

"May I go with you, Dick?" asked Kate.

"No; remain here."

The answer was kindly yet authoritative.

"But, you will not expose yourself, Dick?"

"No, I promise you that. I will safely return."

The Sarcophagus was a one-story building, with a false front. A rude stairs led from within to the loft overhead, the space left vacant by the incline of the roof, and which had been used as sleeping quarters.

At the front end of the loft, and also at the rear, was a window.

Dick sprung up the ladder, and was soon at the front window, where he could see the crowd in the street below.

"Hello, out there!" he called.

"Ther same ter you!" came back the response.

"What are you going to do? It will be death to you to break in here."

"We are goin' ter burn ye out, that's what!"

"You will burn half a hundred of your own men if you do that. We have that many prisoners."

"Let 'em burn! That will be all ther less ter divide ther boodle 'mongst! We ar' goin' ter roast ye alive, cuss yer!"

"That's all right, but you will burn the money at the same time, for it is here in the saloon with us. Now, I am going to make a proposition to you."

Just then there was another crash against the door below.

"We don't want ter hear et! We know what we ar' about, you bet! You stay in thar an' roast, fer we know ye can't git out. We don't believe ther gold is thar, an' we'll take chances!"

Dick withdrew at once, knowing it was useless.

to parley further. As he did so there was another crash against the door.

He ran to the rear window and looked out. There all was darkness, and not a sound was to be heard below. The whole crowd appeared to be in the front.

Hastening down the stairs again, Dick hurriedly consulted with the others, and their plan was soon laid. Gaggling the prisoners, they slipped out from the place by the rear door, taking the prisoners with them.

CHAPTER XVI.

ROUNDING UP THE HORDE.

IN giving the rascals in the saloon free license at the bar, Deadwood Dick had done a wise thing, though it had not resulted in just the manner he had had in view at the time of doing so.

The men were getting crazy drunk as fast as they could, and were so occupied with their drinking and their shouts of defiance to their brethren without, that they did not notice this retreat by the rear door on the part of the detectives and their prisoners.

Once out from the saloon, Dick kept well in the shadows and away from the street, making his way up the gulch with all haste.

On coming out, the prisoners had refused to walk, evidently thinking that by this means they would delay their captors and bring about their discovery, but there were enough of the captors to carry them, and that was done.

They had not gone far when they were met by a party coming from the opposite direction. There were three men and a woman, and Dick challenged them at once.

"Coke—Hardy?" he spoke.

"Yes," was the response, "with the prisoner."

"All right, but turn with us. We have had to desert the saloon."

The prisoner was a woman, being none other than Eva Armstrong, the supposed daughter of the manager.

The others turned, and all made haste to get to the cottage that had been occupied by Armstrong, where they disposed of the prisoners for the time being.

"We have not won the case yet, by a good deal, remarked Dick.

"No, but we have won a good deal of it," Mason made play upon his words. "We have got the men, and we know where the money is hid."

"And they have got us, like rats in a trap, or they would have, had they a competent leader," Dick rejoined.

"Not with you in command, Deadwood Dick."

"You may see me outdone, this time."

"No fear of it."

"I only wish we had a Gatlin' gun," cried the mayor. "We'd wade in an' mow 'em down. Ter think that I have been boss over sech a p'izen gang! I knowed they was bad, but I never dreamed they was ez bad as this."

There was a good deal of debate, then, in which it was decided to remain there till morning, unless disturbed.

The weapons that had been taken from the men at the saloon had been rendered useless, so, even though the men opposed them again, weapons would be fewer.

As Dick had said, they were still in a desperate situation, and one that might have been rendered desperate indeed, had the horde of ruffians had a leader to direct their movements intelligently.

For hours the uproar at the saloon was kept up, but at last it died out, and finally the camp became still.

It lacked then but an hour or two of daylight.

"The rum has done it," said Dick. "We must take them early, if we take them at all!"

"And we'll do it," declared Mason; and the mayor and the others agreed in that.

Hardy and Cooley were the only ones who could resume the disguises they had worn before, all the others having been now exposed.

They were out first of all, before daylight, but not a great deal ahead of Dick, Mason, and the others.

Kodak Kate, now in another disguise, was close by Dick's side.

She was attired now as a handsome young sport, a disguise which was as perfect as the one she had laid aside.

Drunken men were found lying everywhere about the camp, and every one was relieved of his weapons as soon as discovered, and the weapons were as promptly thrown away or made useless.

When morning dawned, not more than a quarter of the population of the camp was astir.

Up the street from the direction of the gulch came the Irish tinker, at an early hour, singing as merrily as a lark:

"Oh-ho, whin Oi'm at a wake,
A ruction Oi make,
Oi am boss av dhe ranch or Oi'm nothing at all;
Oi take me best gurrel,
And a-dancin' we whirl,
And dhe spalpeen dhat gets in me way takes a fall!"

"Oh-ho, wid whisky galore,
No less and no more,
Me loife is contint when dhey l'ave me alone;
But 'tis me deloight,
To get in a foight,
And dhen wid a shtick Oi'm a terror, ochone!"

At the same time, down the street from the opposite direction came Pompey Sunflower, the camp's colored barber, his face expanded into a broad smile of good will for everybody.

"Hello, naygur!" greeted the young Irishman, as they met. "Dhe top av dhe marning to ye."

The smile on Pompey's face had vanished instantly, and turning upon the tinker in a rage, he hotly demanded:

"Who yo' call niggur, hey? yo' low-down, good-for-nothing!"

"Phwat are ye, dhen? Ye are no blonde, dhat Oi'll be bound."

"I's a gentleman ob color, sah; dhat's what I am."

"Oi agree wid ye, begorra! It's a fast-black brunette ye are."

"Look heah, yo' low-down pot-tinker! I hab yo' to know yo' can't sult me! Yo' take dat back, or I'll kyarve ye, an' kyarve ye deep. I has a razor right heah in my boot."

"Begob, ye had better have a care how ye are talkin', naygur, or Oi'll take me iron and be afther breakin' dhe pate av ye wid it."

"Yo' call me nigger 'gain! I's gwine to cut ye, now, and cut ye deep!"

With that warning, Pompey reached toward his boot to get his weapon, when the tinker, dropping his kit and furnace, sprung upon him.

And then at it they went, tooth and nail, so to say; each shouting and yelling in a way that was calculated to arouse the whole camp, and men came running from every direction.

"Oi'll chew ye, begob!" cried the tinker.

"I's gwine bite yo' nose off!" yelled the barber.

"Oi'll twist yer neck fur ye, ye thafe av a naygur, ye!"

"Yo' jes' mind out, or yo' get yo' blame' ol' punkun bu'sted!"

So their cries were commingled, as they fought hard and furiously, each trying to gain the mastery.

It did not take long to draw a crowd, and in a few minutes there was a ring around the combatants, every man in the camp who was sober enough to get there being in it.

This was fun for them, and they were yelling themselves hoarse, urging the two belligerents on to harder work.

"Go fer him, Irish!"

"Do him up, barber!"

"Soldier him, tinker!"

"Cut him, nigger!"

It was lively, and they were bound to make it more so, if possible.

The crowd did not observe the men who were surrounding them, each with a rifle in his hands.

In fact, the tinker and the barber were making it so lively and interesting that there was little chance for the crowd to take note of anything else.

Presently a voice from the outside of the circle shouted:

"Cut his Irish throat, Sunflower! Poke your soldering iron down his neck, McGee! You are not half fighting!"

The fighters seemed to act upon that suggestion at once, for they pulled apart from each other immediately, and while the tinker sprung for his iron the darky drew a razor from his boot.

"Oi'll fix ye now, begorra!" panted the tinker.

"Yes, an' I'll fix ye, too, if ye come near me!" puffed the barber.

The young Irishman flourished his iron menacingly, and the gentleman of color brandished his nicked razor.

Instead of advancing, however, they made the distance between them wider as they moved around, each keeping his eyes upon the other.

"Oi'll plunk ye!"

"I's gwine kyarve ye!"

Suddenly, and at the same instant, each made a move as if to spring upon the other, and then as suddenly both dropped their weapons, turned,

and with yells of fright broke out of the ring in opposite directions and ran.

The roar of laughter that went up from the crowd was speedily checked.

"Throw up your hands, every man of you!" was the stern order.

There they were, like a flock of sheep, surrounded by ten or a dozen grim rifles, and Deadwood Dick, mounted upon a box with a brace of revolvers in hand, had given the command.

One look was enough, and as one man the crowd obeyed.

"Form in line!" Dick further ordered, instantly, taking advantage of their momentary consternation.

"This, too, was obeyed.

The trick that had trapped them had been a neat one.

No sooner in line than the men with the rifles closed in upon them, and every man was under cover.

Not a hand could be lowered in the whole line without inviting a shot, and the crowd realized how cleverly they had been bunched there and overcome.

By this time the Irish tinker and the darky barber had run back again, and they now passed along the line, disarming each man in turn, while Deadwood Dick reminded the rascals that it would be death for any man to resist.

The work was speedily done, and the weapons had been made useless as fast as taken.

"What ar' ye goin' ter do with us?" asked one man.

"I could take you prisoners, and make you suffer for what you have done in opposing officers in the discharge of their duty," was Dick's answer. "But, I am willing to give you another chance."

"What kind of er chance?" asked another fellow.

"A chance to become orderly and law-abiding citizens," responded Dick. "I have made your mayor here a deputy marshal, and he and his assistants are going to enforce his rule in this camp. They are armed, while you are not, and you must obey them. That is the chance for you to redeem yourselves."

"But, we ain't no darn hyenas, Deadwood Dick, ter be treated like this hyer," yet another growled.

"Your conduct of last night was not such as to assure me that you are very far different from hyenas," Dick returned. "You have heard my decision, and as the present head of this camp, I shall enforce it."

CHAPTER XVII.

IN CONCLUSION.

WITH the camp disarmed, the backbone of the uprising was broken, and Deadwood Dick was master of the situation.

He then and there addressed the crowd at length, giving them due warning of what to expect if they interfered further with him and his men in their duty, and that done, he bade them disperse.

This they did, sullenly, and Dick and his men, keeping together, returned to the house where the prisoners had been left.

Here Detectives Hardy and Cooley laid off their disguises, to put them on no more in the present case.

The hiding-place of the stolen gold had already been found.

The work of each of the detectives has not been followed in detail, since lack of space made such a record impossible. Let it suffice to say that each had done his part, and had done it well.

The gold, as Detective Mason had rightly suspected, had been brought to the camp in the machinery intended for the mine, and it had been unpacked and buried under the floor of the stamp-mill, where it still remained, the secret being known only to the few concerned.

The robbery had been committed by Keeler, the "New Jesse," so called; and the men with him—Banton, Hokley, and others.

The murder of Banton and Hokley was brought home to Keeler in a way that was not to be doubted.

It had been his intention to kill every one of the others, when he would have the wealth to himself, to do with as he pleased.

His game had been nipped.

The stage that morning was delayed, by order of Deadwood Dick, and was not allowed to depart until he had arranged his plans thoroughly.

When, finally, it did set out, it had the prisoners aboard, with two of the detectives to

guard them to a temporary destination, where they were to await the arrival of Dick and Mason.

After they had gone, a freight wagon was made ready, and the gold was taken from its hiding-place and loaded upon it.

While this was being done, that part of the camp's population who were in condition to be about, looked on wistfully, but being disarmed they could do nothing to carry out their hearts' desire.

The mayor of the camp, with his few backers, stood with cocked rifles in the defense of the detectives in their work, and finally that work was accomplished. All the gold had been packed on the heavy wagon, and was ready for transportation. It was, in truth, a valuable freight.

The detectives bought horses at the camp, such as they were able to get, and at length were ready to set out.

Dick then turned the camp over to the care of its mayor, and with a last word of warning to its citizens, set forth upon the home trail, his wife riding by his side.

It had been a most daring and desperate raid, but a successful one.

The gold finally reached its destination, less the comparatively small sum the robbers had squandered.

The robbers were dealt with according to law as it applied to their cases, and received such punishment as they deserved.

The scheme had been a well-laid one, and but for over-care in the matter it might have been successful. It had been their extreme care that had given the detectives their clue.

At the bottom of it had been Milton Armstrong, and that name, needless to say, was an assumed one. He had been a Government employee in a high station, but had fallen from grace owing to his evil ways. Knowing of the intended shipment, he had resolved to capture it.

He was in communication with Horsehead, Radlay, Mander and others, who had also been in Government employ, and he knew that Horsehead, or "Keeler," as we have known him, was at the head of an outlaw band and had made for himself a reputation as the "New Jesse." Letting him into his scheme, he had at once the hearty co-operation of the band.

Every detail had been provided for. After the gold had been put aboard the boat, then the men dropped out of sight and the woman, who has been known as Eva Armstrong and who passed for the manager's daughter at Death's-Head, took charge of the shipment of the machinery, under the directions of the men. That she was not Armstrong's daughter has been plainly enough hinted before. Sportive Sport, too, was one of the same rascally band.

Keeler, as we have best known him, was not content to play second fiddle to Armstrong, and, had he been allowed enough time, the mysterious deaths at Death's-Head would have kept on till he would have been left alone with the secret and the golden treasure. Wild Ward was dealt with by Dick, and was sent back to prison, where he soon afterward took his own life. Of the other rascals, nothing need be said in conclusion, except that they were punished as they justly deserved. At Death's-Head, Mayor Corrigan held the master hand, and finally that camp became a decent place.

Dick and Kate returned to Bristol City for a brief season. Both were anxious to see their boy, young Dick. There, in the love of her husband, and with her precious boy close to her heart, Kate could have settled down to the peace and quiet of domestic happiness; but for Dick such repose would never do. Not that he did not enjoy it, not that it did not give him pleasure, but his oath was registered, and only a brief respite could he give evil and evil-doers. And that being so, Kate, whose will was almost as firm as his own, and whose place was by his side, stood ready to face dangers with him in whatever form they might appear.

The other detectives, who, with Deadwood Dick, had in this case made up the Big Six, had parted with Dick and his wife with feelings of keenest admiration and friendship. Each of them retained his diamond pin, a present from Dick and a souvenir of the case in which they had taken part as the Diamond Dice.

THE END.

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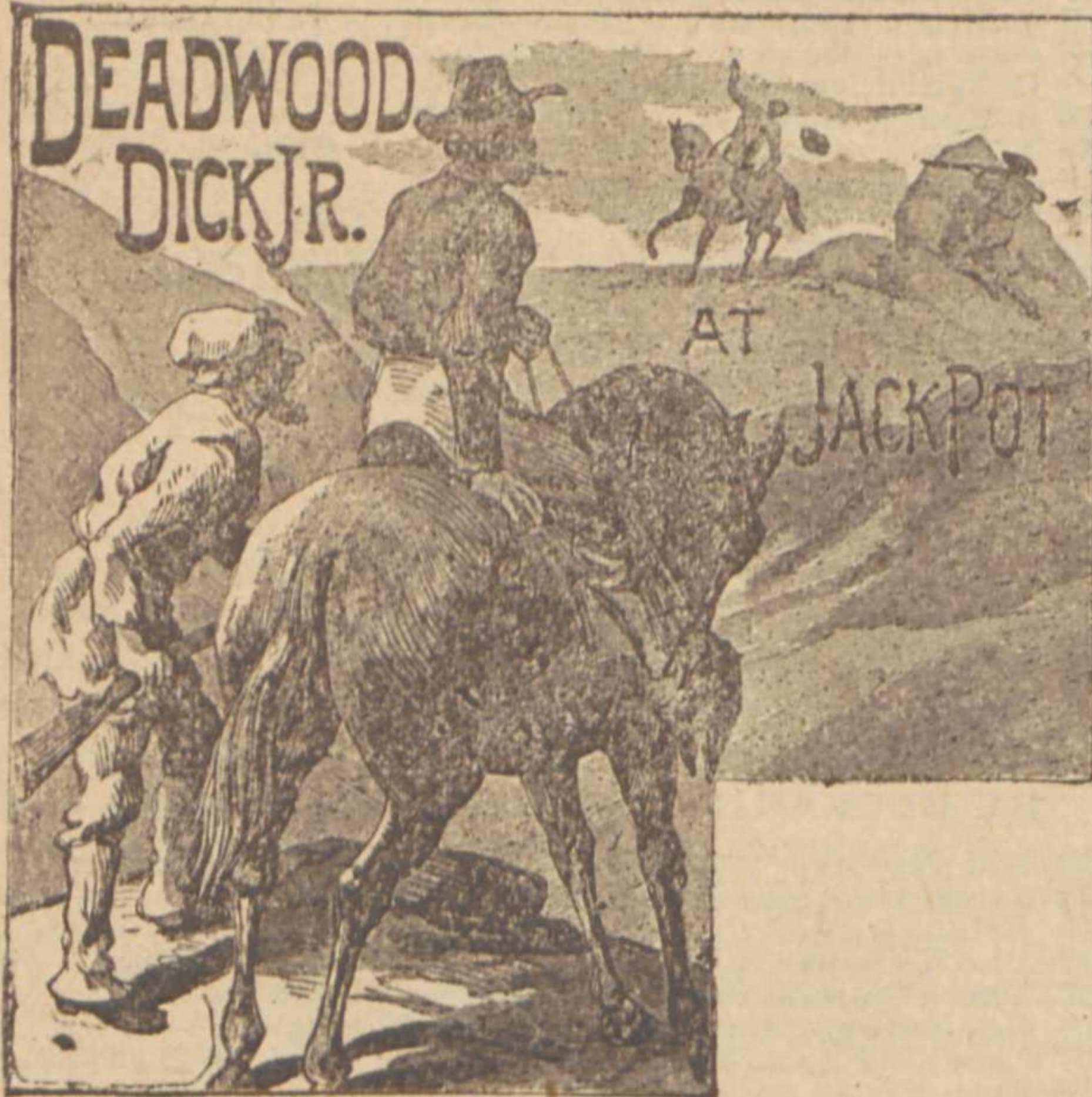
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